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THE REVELATION
GIVEN TO
ST. JOHN THE DIVINE.

ERRATA.

Page 3, line 6 from bottom, *for* 'rather than' *read* 'not.'

Page 16, line 13, *for* 'applied' *read* 'used.'

Page 17, lines 1—4, *read*, 'The Spirit of God in this address is distinct from God, as the Church of God is presented in seven symbolic lamps, which are distinct from each other; and this is seen in the vision.'

Page 21, last line, *for* 'failing' *read* 'falling.'

Page 45, line 7 from bottom, *for* 'in xi. 48' *read* 'in John xi. 48.'

Page 54, line 13 from bottom, *after* 'work' *insert*, 'or be fulfilled.'

THE REVELATION

GIVEN TO

ST. JOHN THE DIVINE.

*AN ORIGINAL TRANSLATION, WITH CRITICAL
AND EXPOSITORY COMMENTS.*

BY

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PREFACE.

THE Bishop of Durham (B. F. Westcott, D.D.), speaking at Newcastle-on-Tyne, in March, 1895, said: The first great master of Biblical criticism has stated that in every syllable of the Bible there is a mystery. The constant work of fifty years had satisfied him that there was no exaggeration even in that striking phrase. He never compared the Authorized Version, the Revised Version, and the Greek text together without feeling that he had learned something fresh, when he went back to the primal roots, and carefully weighed the differences of the terms.

The 'Original Translation' which is given in this Commentary is intended to preserve the precise English equivalents of the Greek text. The author has purposely avoided reshaping the sentences according to the laws of English composition, in the hope that the comparison of his literal renderings with those of the Authorized and Revised Versions will be specially suggestive to his readers.

Another remark of the Bishop was that when they came to render what they believed to be living words, they should not be satisfied merely with solemn music.

H. L.



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CHAPTER I.

ORIGINAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

1 JESUS CHRIST'S REVELATION, which God gave to
him to show to his servants things which must
quickly occur: and he showed (it) by signs, sending
2 through his angel, to his servant John; who testified
the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ—
whatsoever he saw.

3 Blessed (is) he who reads, and those who hear, the
words of the prophecy, and who keep what are
written in it: for the season is near.

4 John to the seven churches in Asia:—

Grace (be) to you, and peace, from The Existing,
The Was, and The Coming; and from the seven
5 spirits in front of his throne; and from Jesus Christ
—(he is) the faithful witness, the first-born of the
dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us, and loosed us out of our
6 sins in his blood:—and he made us a kingdom—
priests to his God and Father: to him (belongs) the
glory and the force, for the ages of ages. Amen.

7 See! he is coming in the midst of the clouds;
and every eye, and whosoever pierced him, will see
him; and all the tribes of the earth will beat them-
8 selves over him. Aye, amen. 'I am the *A* and the *Ω*
(the *A* and the *Z*), says the Lord God, The Existing,
and The Was, and The Coming, The Almighty.

2 *The Revelation given to St. John the Divine*

9 I, John, your brother and fellow-sharer in the
oppression and kingdom and endurance in Jesus,
came to be in the island called Patmos, on account
10 of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I
came to be in spirit on the Lord's day, and heard
11 behind me a loud voice, as if of a trumpet saying,
'Write into a scroll that which thou seest, and send
(the scroll) to the seven churches : unto Ephesus, and
unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamus, and Thyateira,
and unto Sardeis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto
12 Laodiceia.' And I turned round to see the voice,
what (voice it was that) was talking with me : and
13 when I turned round, I saw seven gold lampstands,
and in the midst of the lampstands (one) like the
Son of man, clothed to the feet, and girded round
14 at the breast with a gold girdle : but his head and
hair (were) bright, as if bright wool, as if snow ;
15 and his eyes as if a flame of fire ; and his feet
like bronze (were) as if fired in a furnace ; and
16 his voice as if a voice of many waters ; and (he)
having in his right hand seven stars ; and a double-
edged sharp broadsword passing out from his mouth ;
17 and his face, as if the sun shines in its strength.
And when I saw him, I fell at his feet, as if a corpse ;
and he laid his right hand upon me, saying, 'Do not
18 fear : I am the first, and the last, and the living ;
and I became dead, and, see, I am living for the
ages of ages ; and I have the keys of Death and
19 Hades. Write, then, what thou sawest, and what
20 the (things) represent, and what (things) are about
to occur after them ;—the secret of the seven stars
which thou sawest on my right hand ; and the seven
gold lampstands. The seven stars are angels of the
seven churches ; and the seven lampstands are seven
churches.'

THE VISION OF THE LIVING CHRIST.

This book is spoken of as a 'Revelation,' which literally means an 'uncovering,' as of a person *unveiling* a picture or statue, or his own face; but here applied, without reference to any veil, to the pictures and language by which the future events are symbolically disclosed.

The principal manuscript authorities for the text are : (1) The Sinaitic MS., found by Tischendorf, in 1859, in St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai, probably written in the fourth century; (2) the Alexandrian, once possessed by Cyrillus Lucaris, Patriarch, first of Alexandria and then of Constantinople (died about 1638), who ten years before his death gave it to our Charles I.; (3) the Ephraem MS., consisting of a life of Ephraem the Syrian (died about 378), written over the greater part of a MS. of the Old and New Testament; probably a little earlier than the Alexandrian MS. of the fifth century. All are written in Greek capital letters.

The most important reference in the Fathers to the Book of Revelation and its author is found in Justin Martyr (between A.D. 139 and 161). 'A certain man amongst us, named John, one of the Apostles of Christ, in a revelation made to him, prophesied' certain things about a millennium, and a resurrection of all men.

SECTION I. VERSES 1 TO 3. THE CALL TO ATTENTION.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

I.—QUICKLY. Literally, *in quick (time)*; meaning *without delay*, rather than *soon*. In its ordinary use the adverb *quickly* is an exact translation of the Greek adverb, and means *swiftly* or *soon*.

SHOWED BY SIGNS. The Greek term suggests 'showing boundaries by boundary-stones'; 'foreshowing by omens'; 'showing anything by a sign or agreed signal, as

at sea, or in war, or in trade by trade-marks. In the New Testament St. John uses the word three times: John xii. 33, where Christ speaks of His being lifted up, as a sign of the death He would die; so xviii. 32; and xxi. 19, where He speaks of Peter stretching forth his hands, and being girded, etc., with a similar significance. The only other place in which it is used is where Agabus 'signified' an approaching famine; but we are not told how he did so. Our Lord speaks of the *sign* of the Son of man appearing in heaven (Matt. xxiv. 30), evidently not the Son of man Himself; and of the *signs of the times* (Matt. xvi. 3), but this passage is omitted by a majority of the best MSS. and ancient translations. In other places miracles are called *signs*. It is of importance to bear in mind that the whole succeeding prophecy is one set forth by signs rather than by words.

2.—TESTIFIED. The word means, *to bear witness to a thing*; in this case to God's Word and to Christ's testimony.

WHATSOEVER HE (*i.e.*, John) SAW. St. John's care (John xx. 30) in cautioning the readers of his Gospel, that he had not put down all he knew, is of use in giving the readers of this book confidence that here they have a complete and perfected work.

3.—THE SEASON. The *right point of time*, or *season of action*. The word is sometimes used, like our *time*, for the *state of affairs* (Luke xii. 56).

KEEP. The same word as is used for keeping God's commands; *control their thoughts and actions* by the knowledge given them in this work. See also xxii. 7. All Divine revelations have distinctly practical ends in view.

Expository Notes.

1.—The title, or preface, is somewhat indistinct, owing to the pronouns being as obscure in the Greek original as in the English translation. The writer seems to mean a

revelation which God gave to Jesus Christ in order that He might give to His (Christ's) servants some idea of events which would soon transpire. Christ showed what He did show through the medium of an angel, using symbols and signs which John was commissioned to record. It is from St. John's pen that *we* have the revelation, but he had it, through the angel, from Christ, and Christ had it from God.

QUICKLY. That God will avenge His saints 'quickly' is stated by our Lord (Luke xviii. 7). He intimates that God is bringing about the vengeance *as speedily as possible* consistent with His long-suffering. It is obvious that the vengeance which God, in His justice and benevolence, must take, is not to be obtained by any sudden or direct exercise of His overwhelming power—arbitrary though just. His vengeance will not merely be just in itself, but convincing to all in heaven and in earth, whether they are acquitted or condemned. It will be the full and fair consequence of the acts of the wicked, when tested judicially by a system of reactions efficiently carried out; somewhat as the scientific teacher applies his tests, in chemistry or in physics, before his audience, so that all come to agree with him in the conclusion at which he arrives. The wicked are tried under the long-suffering of God, while He maintains the laws of their probationary life.

The final judgment, or day of the Lord, is not the trial which precedes a pronounced judgment, as in our courts of law. It is rather the declaration of results from the books (Dan. vii. 10; Rev. xx. 12), the separation of the tares from the wheat at the harvest time (Matt. xiii. 39 to 43); or of the sheep and the goats (Matt. xxv. 32). It is the carrying out of such measures as are necessary for the just recompense and protection of the saints. This final judgment must be postponed to the end of the world, but it is repeatedly described as coming *quickly*. This would

hardly be said if God were now standing aloof, and in no sense bringing forward the trial. It rather implies that He is now very actively conducting the trial, adjusting the tests, and ordering the world so as to bring up the full case complete for judgment as early as possible.

The only angels mentioned by St. John elsewhere are *signs*, seen in his vision. All are heavenly beings of some sort, *i.e.*, they are seen in God's heaven, or in earth's heaven; for none appear in the 'new heaven.' Even the seven angels of the seven churches are seen as stars, in symbolical representation. The preface expresses plainly that the whole vision is revealed to St. John by an angel, and that all the characters in it are visionary signs.

3.—In no other inspired book is a blessing pronounced on those who read it. St. John, in his Gospel, twice approaches the subject very nearly (John xx. 30, 31; xxi. 24, 25). It is neither general custom nor personal habit that causes him here to pronounce a blessing on the readers. The blessing seems to picture a man reading the book aloud to a school of hearers; and it is given to both the readers and the hearers on the assumption that they follow up the reading and hearing with active obedience.

KEEP WHAT IS WRITTEN IN IT. The same word is used for keeping God's commandments (Matt. xix. 17)—control their thoughts, minds, and actions by it. So far, then, from its being a revelation which is little more than a curious speculation, it is of practical and pressing concern to us. See the conclusion of the book (xxii. 16-21). Though St. John's description of what he saw may be unstudied and homely, yet no book of the Bible gives us more directly an inspired revelation from Christ. St. John allows himself no choice or selection of material (i. 2), as he did when preparing his Gospel (John xxi. 25). He does not exercise imagination in selecting his figures or similes, as the psalmists and prophets do. He writes

under an evident sense of responsibility for recording precisely every word of the messages and descriptions that were given to him (xxi. 18, 19).

So when St. John writes (verse 3) that 'the season' embraced by this prophecy 'is near,' *i.e.*, close at hand, he uses a term which represents this season not as coming quickly, but as already begun; as readers of Joel in the LXX. would understand, where he says (ch. i. 15), 'The day of the Lord is near'—the same word—of the famine then raging. Indeed, St. Peter says (2 Pet. iii. 9), 'The Lord is not slack concerning His promise'; nor should we expect it in the Creator of this world; so marked as it is by design, by continual exercise of skill, and by pleasure. God has not for ages of ages conducted the evolution of the earth and planets—required by His own choice of laws in order to produce our present flora—as a task, but as His pleasure. Why, then, should He be slack during the age when these evolutions reach their highest interest in the development of man, in man's redemption by Christ, and in the conflict of His servants amongst men with evil? The Creator is not a labourer engaged to make and carry on a world on laws which he did not fix, and under compulsion which is irksome.

SECTION II. VERSES 4 TO 8. ADDRESS AND BENEDICTION.

Exegetical and Critical Notes.

4.—CHURCH. The Greek word is *ecclesia*, a *summoned assembly*; but it is often translated, as here, by the word *church*, a corrupted form of *curiacon*, meaning the Lord's (house). St. Paul uses the two ideas as of equivalent meaning (1 Tim. iii. 5). There is no precisely suitable English term.

FROM (twice): *as their origin*, or one might almost say *material*.

5.—RULER: or *prime ruler*. The title was most notably applied to the first and chief of the nine magistrates who ruled Athens, and all her tributary states, in the time of her power. It was used generally for men in chief official positions (Matt. xx. 25).

SINS: *failure, fault, sin*. See the New Testament use of this word. It seems to apply to wrong acts; and not to such an impalpable essence as can be loosed or bound, forsaken or let go, without any sensible result to anyone concerned. *That* is an invention of false teachers.

IN HIS BLOOD. In vii. 14, the figure is washing clothes *in* his blood: in both cases the meaning is spiritual, viz., that the fact of the Lamb's death gave Him the position or power to loose us out of sin, and gives us the position or power to wash our clothes. What the latter position is—its confidence, gratitude, and assurance—some have experienced. Of the former—Christ's—we can only know what He has told us, and had better leave the preposition as vague as St. John has left it.

6.—PRIESTS—THE GLORY—THE FORCE. We shall meet with these ejaculatory reflections frequently, sometimes leading on to whole sentences. All are nominatives, without any verb, and in apposition to nothing; just as above, in verse 5.

EVER AND EVER: the ages of ages; see iv. 10.

7.—BEAT THEMSELVES. Beating the breast had become as instinctive an expression of grief to the Israelite and other nations as shrugging the shoulders is of various emotions to some modern peoples.

Expository Notes.

4.—St. John, having first given the title of his book, writes its address. He addresses it to the seven churches which he had seen figured as seven lampstands in his vision. He opens it with a benediction from three of the symbols of God that were shown him in that vision, viz.,

from the Almighty, as seated on His throne in heaven and worshipped there (xi. 17); from the seven spirits of God, which he had seen figured as seven lamps burning in front of the throne of the Almighty in heaven (iv. 5); and from Jesus Christ, who, seen in the vision as standing amidst the seven lampstands, had dictated a message to the angel of each church. It is from Christ, especially, that the revelation which he is about to write comes; and he pauses to give him three titles suggested to him by that revelation. Christ is the 'faithful witness': St. John has perfect confidence in what Christ had revealed to him; and he has vividly in recollection the final victory gained by Him who is faithful and true (xix. 11). Again, Christ is the 'firstborn of the dead,' and the dead He will raise to share in His kingdom (xx. 4), and to reign with Him on earth a thousand years, so soon as His Father shall give Him the kingdom. Christ, too, is the prime ruler over all the kings and kingdoms of the earth, which are about to be described as St. John saw them symbolized in a succession of visions.

5.—St. John still cannot dismiss the theme of Christ with mere titles; he adds praise. Christ's death assures us of His love to us while we are sinners, and of our being loosed out of our sins. Were it not for the first, He would never have cared to die; were it not for the last, there would have been no object in His dying.

6.—He has made us a 'kingdom,' but not such as these earthly kingdoms of the vision; so St. John adds another figure—'priests of God.'

Christ excels also, not only in glory (compare Eph. iii. 20, 21, for a fuller expression), but also in force; not once, but for ever. *Glory* (the Greek word) is merely *opinion*, held by others of a man, *estimation*, and so *glory*. It implies approval and admiration.

Ages of ages, or the ages of the ages. As nearly a scientific term as could be framed in human language. Our know-

ledge intensifies the meaning of such an expression. We have some idea of the length of the geological eras through which our earth has passed, under very different conditions of flora, of structure, of heat and cold; and we have some idea of astronomical eras, since the time when our earth and moon formed parts of the sun. And we know of distant suns that have become cold and dark, having passed through their eras; and of others that are nebulous, and only beginning their series of eras. This knowledge of ours, however, does not enable us to improve upon the expression 'for the ages of the ages,' as a symbolic and suggestive expression for a never-ceasing, unlimited duration.

7.—After this ascription of praise, St. John throws some light on the character of Christ's appearance in the visions which he is about to describe. The expression *See! he comes, or is coming* is ordinarily used to call attention to what will be seen coming directly. Compare Zechariah, quoted by St. John (John xii. 15): 'See! daughter of Zion, thy King comes (or is coming) seated on a colt,' etc. The whole Book of Revelation consists of a series of pictures, in which there is, again and again, some illustration of Christ's presence as in the clouds (see Matt. xxiv. 30; xxvi. 64); that is, as invisible to the un-Christian inhabitants of the earth. Our Lord's reply to the high-priest (Mark xiv. 62), if we had only Mark's account, would have left the *time* indefinite; but Matthew tells us that Christ said He would be seen from that time forward, 'sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds' (Matt. xxvi. 64). Luke gives only a part of our Lord's reply (Luke xxii. 69), that which refers to our Lord's being at the right hand of God.

Our Lord's presence *on earth* was not recognised by all (John viii. 9); it was concealed, figuratively, 'shrouded by clouds,' from those who had no will to do God's will. Much more, then, is His presence likely to escape recog-

dition when He is withdrawn from sight, and sitting on high at the right hand of the Father.

But besides saying that the Son of man *is* now coming in the clouds, St. John adds that all *will* see Him, even those who before the time of their seeing Him had pierced Him, and those to whom the sight of Him will be a grief. This may refer to the time when the Son of man first appears in the earthly heaven in connection with clouds, in the scenes of this vision (*viz.*, xiv. 14), when He has ceased to sit at the right hand of God, and is Himself crowned. It is evident that, however obscured to the view of the inhabitants of the earth for awhile, the time must come when the Son of man will be clearly seen by all.

The expression 'He is coming in the clouds,' etc., is concluded abruptly by a ratification suddenly given by St. John, as the ambassador, and not simply as the prophet, of Jesus Christ. In God's name he accepts and ratifies both what the address contains, and the application to Christ Himself of the symbols hereinafter following. It is immaterial whether the 'Aye, amen' be St. John's, and similar to the 'Thus saith the Lord' of the old prophets, or is like our Lord's 'Verily, verily,' which introduce the statement of a truth or instruction which could only be known from God Himself. In either case the 'Aye, amen,' are the words of ratification (2 Cor. i. 20)—the former in Greek, the latter in Hebrew. Or, again, we may take the 'Aye' as Christ's, and the 'Amen' as St. John's (xxii. 20). In this ratification it seems as impossible to separate God the Father from God the Son, as it was for Moses when he was addressed out of the burning bush. The name *I am*, then declared to Moses as the name of the God about to deliver Israel, and to bring the nation into the blessings promised to Abraham, is here intensified by being carried into both the past and the future, and is illustrated very remarkably by the reference

to the alphabet. From St. John, the beloved disciple of our Lord on earth, this strong assurance that the Son of man is the same through all the scenes of this unfolding vision as He had always been in times before, and that He would never fail His servants, comes as a cheering encouragement to us. We are about to follow the lead of these visions into the far future, and to see the hostility of the world and its kingdoms to Christ and His servants, as it can be pictured in a series of the most stirring incidents and situations. Christ is in all that is coming to pass, even as He has been in all the buried past.

NOTES ON THIS SECTION.

(1) *The Word 'Ecclesia,' or Church.*—St. John addresses his message to certain symbols or signs that were shown him in the vision when he was 'in the spirit.' They were 'seven churches.' The Greek word *ecclesia* is frequently translated by the English word *church*. It is not properly *church*, for *church* is an Anglicized term derived from a different Greek word, *curiacon*, which means *the Lord's (place or house)*. *Ecclesia* means originally *a summoned assembly*. An assembly, so called, was made up (if a quorum attended), held, and dissolved. In the New Testament, so far as affects this book, it seems to mean a body of people who have been invited, by an ordained apostle, presbyter, or householder, to worship God together in convenient places of meeting, and have accepted and acted upon the invitation. *Ecclesia*, not *church*, has a more spiritual meaning in Eph. i. 22, 23; Col. i. 18. In these passages it includes all those who form the body of which Christ is the head, such as are elsewhere described as '*called by God*' to various duties and graces. In the Book of Revelation this latter sense of *ecclesia* is never used. If referred to at all, it can only be symbolically, but the more spiritual meaning need not be introduced. The English word *church* means an ecclesiastical building, and,

metaphorically, all its 'connection,' *i.e.*, the baptized members of the Christian body who use it for worship. The word *congregation* means an assembly, and cannot properly be used to mean the 'connection,' as a limitation to the baptized, either metaphorically or otherwise.

(2) *The Varied Uses of Numbers*.—A number may be used either strictly, as expressing a definite and recognised quantity, or colloquially, or symbolically.

A number may be used in ordinary, or in official, and even in poetical or historical language, in quite a vague way. Even in our newspapers, in a price-list, a stranger might be deceived if he gave the numbers their strict value. A dozen, a hundred, a score, a thousand, are terms often used of inexact quantities. Sometimes the number is evidently not counted: we say *three or four, a dozen, one hundred, one thousand*. Such vague numbers are constantly used in ordinary talk, in histories of battles or of losses of life, in groups of soldiers or of voters, and in estimates of time. A division of a county is a hundred. In some of the most intelligent Eastern nations *three* was the largest number recognised without counting. If you say you passed three men, it is understood to be three strictly; but if you say you passed four men, unless otherwise intimated, the strict number would not be understood, but the term would be similar to our half a dozen.

On the other hand, *ten* is in some districts used for a number which includes all beyond itself. An old farmer in the East, being asked by me his age, answered, 'How should I know? I am ten years old;' and there was not the faintest approach to a smile on the faces of any of his country people, young or old, male or female, who stood around listening. The words meant, 'My years exceed the number which lays hold on the mind and memory, without careful counting. I have not counted them. I have no register of them.'

The symbolical meaning of numbers is chiefly of

interest as they are used in the Scriptures. Thus, three is always a definite number of a sacred character. It is often closely associated with God and His immediate interference; and also with great and portentous human woes—compare the prophet Gad's offer to David (2 Sam. xxiv. 12, etc.; 1 Chron. xxi. 10, etc.). Many later instances occur up to, and including, our Lord's three days in the tomb. Again a *heptad*, or *week*, of things or of seasons, has a peculiar significance. What is the earliest use of it can never, of course, be known; but it pleased God to reveal the account of the creation of the earth, as we know it, out of a preceding chaos, as a series of acts arranged in an order of *six days*, together with a seventh day of 'rest.'

The number seven was accepted as a counted number, indicating completeness and perfection. Ten and twelve in some sense correspond to our 'dozen'; but ten indicates incompleteness, twelve indicates completeness. We speak of a bundle of samples as *about ten*—twelve makes a complete package. The enlargement of numbers without loss of their character is to be obtained by multiplication.

A heptad, or week of years, was an interval marked by Jacob's service for Rachel (Gen. xxix. 18). At the close of every week of years, every Israelite was freed from all debts owed to a fellow-Israelite (Deut. xv. 1). The Mosaic ritual required on every seventh (or, as the Jews would say, eighth) year a solemn rest of the land from all cultivation and pruning (Lev. xxv. 4); but a week of weeks of years—every seventh sabbath of years—was the great jubilee, when all property that had been sold was to return to its owner (Lev. xxv. 8, etc.). So twelve was the original number of the sons of Israel; but, to represent the great extension of the chosen people, in this vision, each patriarch is reckoned as forefather of twelve—not of twelve tribes, for the word *tribes* is already appropriated to the descendants of Jacob, but of twelve *thousands*, the

term in ordinary use for the largest of the divisions making up a tribe (Exod. xviii. 25; Num. i. 16, etc.).

Mathematical preciseness is not the rule of the world's language. In any market in the world, if you offer to purchase a dozen oranges for a shilling, and your offer be accepted and the oranges tendered, and you ask 'Is this my dozen?' you are liable to receive the reply: 'That is your dozen. I was one or two short of full-sized ones; but for each I was short I have put two smaller ones instead.' Neither the twelve tribes, ten commandments, nor twelve apostles can be counted with modern scientific strictness.

(3) *The Seven Churches.*—In verse 4, St. John addresses the seven churches of Asia. His opening salutation is similar to those in St. Paul's epistles, except that St. John mentions no title or authority of his own. During the forty or fifty years which had elapsed since St. Paul wrote, the names of the Apostles had, doubtless, become too well known to need formal recital. St. John was at home in Asia, and he takes, as usual, such informal title as he loves best. In his Gospel he is *the disciple whom Jesus loved*; in his Epistles he is, perhaps tacitly, *the elder*; here he is *the servant of Jesus Christ*, or plain *John*.

It can hardly be supposed that only seven churches existed in Asia, the extensive Roman province. In Col. iv. 13, St. Paul groups together Colossæ, Laodicea, and Hierapolis—all towns but a few miles apart. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, martyred A.D. 115, wrote to 'the church of Magnesia, near the Mæander,' and to that 'at Tralles, in Asia.' This gives four churches which were existing at St. John's time, besides the seven which he mentions by name. The letter is addressed, not to seven particular churches of St. John's choosing, but, in strict obedience to the command received by him in the vision, to seven *symbolical* churches, as typifying the entire Church. No doubt, as in the case of all other proper

names which occur in the vision, these names are used symbolically, and do not stand for the historical churches themselves.

If we understand them to represent Christ's complete visible Church of that age, and of all ages, we shall see that attention is not directed to the particular members of these churches, but to the mind, the tone, and the temper of each church—the abilities and disabilities which were illustrated in each. Were they not purely symbolical, there would be no reason for the omission of Antioch, Rome, Alexandria. We shall find, further on, how names of real places, or even a group of them, are applied to symbolize some spiritual group, as in many psalms the words are applied to some current event, in order to base on it ideas and promises only to be fulfilled in some far wider and spiritual sense.

(4) *The Name 'God the Father.'*—To return to this address, or preface to the vision (verses 4 to 8): the name of God the Father is introduced under a threefold title, an extension of the simple title of the God of Israel, given to Moses from the burning bush. It extends the name 'I am' forward and backward without limit. We might naturally wish, like Philip (John xiv. 8), to have a little more of the Father told us, or shown us, directly, and we must accept our Lord's answer: 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father,' and St. John's title to this whole book, 'Jesus Christ's Revelation.' So far as we have Jesus Christ revealed to us, there is nothing more to add about God the Father. If 'I am' were a name to impress on the Israelitish Church the omnipresence, omniscience, and almightiness of God, then *this* name presses on our notice His unchangeableness—the persistence of His character, of His designs, and of His will—and prepares us to grasp the immense lapse of time, and apparent delay, required for the full execution of the designs which such a God is working out. The Spirit of

God is included in this address, as the Church of God is included, in seven symbolic lamps, distinct from God, and possibly from each other ; as seen in the vision hereinafter (iv. 5), where no lampstand is mentioned for the lamps. Jesus Christ has a threefold title, ascribing to Him those qualities and acts which make Him loved and trusted by us on earth in the highest conceivable degree.

(5) *The Symbol of the Clouds.*—In the seventh verse, St. John seems to call his readers' attention to the clouds, and in imagination to see them as they drift over the earth, and as they have been associated with God's presence at Sinai, and in the Psalmist's inspired allusions to thunderstorms (Ps. xxix., etc.), and during the transfiguration witnessed by St. John (Matt. xvii. 1-5). The natural inference from his words is, that these clouds will in time be dispersed, and that upon their dispersion Christ will Himself be directly seen. That is in notable contrast, both to the clouds of Sinai, and to the thunderstorms which impressed upon the Psalmist the nearness of a tremendous power: both of these were in time dispersed, but they left no trace behind them. Those who will then see Him will include those who pierced Him, *i.e.*, who pierced Him at any time before His appearance then—those who had during their life acted on the side of the Jews who crucified Him, or of the Romans who carried out the execution and pierced Him. It is clear that the words 'tribes of the earth' mean dwellers upon earth who have their interest in earthly gains, rather than in heavenly, and who regard the coming of Christ as a loss and disaster to them.

(6) *The Style of St. John's Composition.*—Throughout this preface and attestation, and throughout the whole book also, it is especially interesting to follow the words of our Lord's beloved disciple—of him who once mended nets, and fished from his father's boats, on the Sea of Galilee. It is as if the Lord Jesus delighted to leave His

old friend to find his *own* words of description for the visions, but chose to put His signature beforehand, immediately at the end of the address. That confidence in St. John we may share; though we find, in our oldest known MSS. of this Book of Revelation, every rule of grammar—orthography, etymology, syntax, and prosody—violated again and again in the intensity of St. John's feeling. We feel sure that we may trust him; and we are convinced, by the consistency and completeness of what we do understand, that if we had known his colloquial Greek, and had seen his action, and heard his accent, as he dictated the vision to his amanuensis, we should have found his honest description clearer, more exact in details, and more comprehensive and suggestive than anything which a learned philosopher could have drawn up in the best classic Greek.

SECTION III. VERSES 9 TO 20. THE VISION OF THE LIVING CHRIST.

Exegetical and Critical Notes.

9.—CAME TO BE. We have no English for this. In ordinary conversation we say *happened to be*: the literal translation *became* is not used in English.

OF JESUS: *given by Jesus.*

10.—VOICE, or *sound of a voice*, without necessarily hearing the words. The term is used in Greek for inarticulate sounds, as of the sea, water, thunder, wind; usually with a kind of metaphorical notion of the thing's expressing itself in that way; a distinctive sound: not a mere noise.

11.—SAYING: *i.e.*, of the trumpet saying.

SEEST: *hast the power of seeing.* The word is used when sight is given to a blind man: in this case a sight to see visions was about to be given.

14.—BREAST. Literally breasts; but in English we use the singular. So *hair* in verse 15.

BUT: our colloquial *now*.

15.—BRONZE. Here, and in ii. 18, only. Perhaps *gun-metal* would be more correct; but the similitude probably extends to the appearance only, as of a clear Asiatic skin, bright and glistening.

16.—BROADSWORD: not the usual short military sword, of various metals; but a keen, as well as pointed, and double-edged sword of steel. It was the name of a straight and heavy steel sword used by the Thracians; and probably such as we see in the earliest sketches of Gothic and Danish warriors—not in the caricatures of them current amongst their Roman enemies. *Broadsword*, and *voice*, *face*, etc., are all nominatives without verbs, see note on verse 6, thrown out in an ejaculatory way by the prophet.

17.—DO NOT FEAR. The Greek verb translated 'fear' is a passive one, of which the most literal English would be, *Do not be scared, i.e., take fright, flee from fear*. The thing or person causing the alarm may be in the accusative (Matt. x. 26, and 28); and the word was used by the heathen for their fear of the gods. Whether the Jews had dropped into the heathen notion, or not, there are few commands more frequently given by God's messengers, and by Christ, than this 'Fear not.'

19.—The verb substantive is used by St. John in the sense of *are meant for, represent*. So our Saviour uses it (Matt. xiii. 20, etc.). St. John seems often to omit the verb substantive, lest it should be mistaken to mean that he is giving the interpretation of his symbols, when he is merely describing the symbols themselves. Literally, this passage is 'what thou sawest, and what they are, and what are about to become after them.'

20.—THE SECRET: the Greek word put into English letters is *mystery*; and suggests the formal ceremony of a

guild or club held in order to give to a new member the reason and rules upon which the guild or club was founded, and the conditions of membership. The *mystery* was a secret to those without, but it was known to those within. It is in the former sense only that the Greek word has been Anglicized, so that, *in English*, a *mystery* means something that nobody can fathom; whereas a *secret* conveys better the original Greek meaning of something simple, and thoroughly well known to any number who know it, and easily told, if it is desirable to do so, to any who do not know it.

20.—ARE: in both cases this verb is expressed, and it is not put in parentheses in the translation. It means *represent*, stand for.

The construction is peculiar: the *lampstands* are in apposition to the *secret*, not to the *stars*. St. John is told to write the secret of the seven stars, and also to write the seven gold lampstands. This seems to be one of the many instances in which we shall find that the apostle, intent upon what he is describing, fails in the grammatical form of his description. It is only important to notice this here, where it can cause no confusion, because other instances occurring later on may cause some perplexity.

Expository Notes.

9.—The title St. John gives himself when he introduces his prophecy shows a mind similar to that of Daniel, to whom revelations of the future of the world were also given. Daniel had visions, in which he saw, and heard described, symbols of the empires which were to rule the world in the interval before Messiah came. He was assured of the final cleansing of the sanctuary, and of the establishment of God's kingdom in all the earth. The state of Daniel's mind may be learnt from his prayer (Dan. ix. 4 to 19), and from the verses which introduce it in the early part of the chapter. We find that he, like

St. John, shared in the oppression, but had full belief that God's kingdom would prevail, and patiently sought to know more certainly the time and completeness of the coming deliverance. In many points the visions of Daniel and St. John resemble each other. In both, beasts are symbols of empire, or of earthly-organized power. The same kingdom, or power, is presented under different aspects or in different relations; and the time of the duration of some symbols is very much the same. The positive and complete overthrow of earthly and daimonic power, and the positive and effective establishment on earth of God's kingdom, is common to them both; though it is given in far more detail to St. John. These two notable servants of God, alike distinguished as beloved (Dan. ix. 23; x. 11), alike proved in their love to God, sought, and received directly from God visions of future events, which were, both as to their manner and matter, selected by God Himself.

10.—Whether it was on the first day of the week, that day on which our Lord had first appeared to His crushed and sorrowful disciples after He had overcome death, or whether in this vision it only *appeared* to be the Lord's day, is not quite clear. Daniel is more precise (Dan. viii. 2). Whether actual or visionary, the day represents a time of rest and revelation: a time of elevation above all the toil and turmoil with which St. John's life had been filled, and of which the visions were to picture the continuance. The first revelation is addressed to the seven angels of the seven churches. Further on we have seven lamps (iv. 5) and seven eyes (v. 6), symbols of the seven Spirits of God, representing every phase of the Spirit's action on earth. Such phases exist, and are described by our Lord (John xiv. 16, 26, etc.).

11.—So far as we know, the sins charged to the angels of these churches are all such as have misled men into impure motives and conduct, into failing from the faith

and love of God, or into wilful jealousy or ignorance. We must compare the 'seven spirits of God' and the seven churches with the use of seven in other groups, *e.g.*, the seven heads of a worldly kingdom (xiii. 1), the seven hills of the seven kings of the scarlet beast (xvii. 3, 9, 10). There were probably seven churches at the seven places named; there were seven empires, the names of which we can guess; legend and poetry have named seven hills of Rome. Each group of seven seals, seven trumpets, etc., gives occasion to seven visions, each vision representing a group of facts; but in each case the reality represented by the vision is not confined by the numerical seven. Even the Roman empire was not always seated on the Roman hills; much less were the whole seven empires so seated. The seven is, after all, a symbol only: not an exact representation of facts.

We cannot but contrast the trumpet voice, used here and elsewhere, with the still small voice of the revelation made to Elijah (1 Kings xix. 12); and we may note the absence of any such trumpet-call to Daniel and to others. We may compare it with the trumpet-call on Sinai (Exod. xix. 16), which ushered in God's covenant with Israel. Here, the call is appropriate to visions which are to reveal the subjugation of all Christ's enemies on earth, and the setting up (Dan. ii. 44) of the kingdom of Christ and of His saints. The visions will show that God is not aloof, nor indifferent; but that all His forces are marching on and working on towards the day when He shall have subdued all His enemies, and placed them under Christ's feet.

12.—St. John turned, and saw a symbol of Christ as standing in the midst of the seven churches. The scene of the symbol is laid, as it were, in the shrine, or 'Holy Place' of the Temple. There is no separate 'Most Holy Place' throughout this prophecy. There, in the 'Holy Place' under the old covenant, the *one* lampstand, which

represented Israel, stood. Here there is no such limitation. Seven similar lampstands represent the universal church on earth. The original shrine in the tabernacle was, on its first erection (Exod. xl. 34, 35), occupied by a dazzling cloud of God's glory, so that not even Moses could enter it. That glorious cloud did not remain in it longer than was necessary to fulfil its typical purpose; but God remained there, and was always present. In the scene described by St. John no place nor furniture is mentioned. The figures stood simply on the earth; so that St. John could fall at the feet of the Son of man. On the earth also stood the seven lampstands, each one like that in the Holy Place of the tabernacle, a representation of which is given on the Arch of Titus. See also one described in a vision of Zechariah (Zech. iv. 2). In the present scene the dazzling glory is displayed, without any cloud, as a living person, so dazzlingly glorified that every feature of his appearance and dress is described as if it were on fire. His face was as bright as the sun in its strength; and there were seven stars in His hand. This glory lasted long enough for St. John to record—long enough for its purpose, but how long St. John does not say; for he fell down before it like one dead.

13.—The Son of man is seen not as a king, but as a priest: in priestly robes, but not in the exact dress of a Mosaic high-priest. He had a brightness, or lustre, which overpowered the colour and appearance which are natural to an earthly body. His voice seems to be heard from everywhere, from all around; for the metaphor (verse 15) appears to include the sound of the sea as heard in a wave-tossed boat, or on a beach, or perhaps on such an island as Patmos. *Many waters* is used for many peoples and nations, and the voice being *like* the sound of many waters may represent the work of Christ upon all things, animate and inanimate.

16.—In, or on, His right hand are seven stars; just as

the natural stars are seen, as was at that time thought, in, or on, the interior of the heavenly vault. These represent a guiding influence over each church (compare xvi. 5). A star, if seen in the earthly heaven, as in some following visions, might be one man, or one or more bodies or schools of men. Stars seem never used as symbols of illumination, but of guiding and influencing. They were used by travellers and voyagers as guides; and to the whole world they were omens, and regarded as, in some mysterious way, controlling even the grandest terrestrial events. In this vision these stars are described as representing the angels of the seven churches. Nothing, however, is seen or heard of these angels as separate individuals: each angel is addressed as a component part of his church. It seems best to suppose that the stars are identified with angels in our ordinary sense of the word (Isa. xiv. 12). Even then, indeed, we learn but little; for our knowledge of the angels is much the same as St. John's knowledge of the stars. Each of the seven churches has its existence on earth symbolized by a lampstand; but, as each child on earth has its guardian angel always beholding the face of the Father who is in heaven (Matt. xviii. 10), so here each church has its angel representative symbolized by a star held in the right hand of the Son of man. St. John is told to write to the angels of the seven churches; and, in doing so, he identifies the angel with the church, and even imputes fault in a personal way to the angel.

A commanding officer, addressing the English captains of seven rather raw black companies after a review, could perhaps address them something in the same way, without actually blaming any captain. He might even threaten to remove the standard, and to break up a company. The angel is never warned that his lampstand will be abolished: it is only liable to be *removed*. Christ addresses these angels in language which applies to their church, and which frequently is inapplicable to an angel, whether man

or spirit. He describes them as being upon their probation, as losing their first love, incurring blame by being neither cold nor hot, etc. This reference to angels will help us in interpreting the *angels* that are seen or heard elsewhere in these visions. *Angel* does not admit of our political sense, *representative*, plenipotentiary: it is the ordinary, simple, and commonplace term, *messenger*.

This kind of *broadsword*, as being the largest, best-tempered, and most effectively used sword known, is perhaps meant to represent the irresistible power of Christ's deeds and words, and, possibly, their keenness and perfect temper.

17.—The beloved disciple fell as a dead man. In the presence of Jesus, who, though not appearing in the form of a conqueror or judge, yet was strangely altered from His previously well-known condition of humiliation, St. John found himself prostrate in mingled reverence and fear. This behaviour of the 'beloved disciple' gave occasion for Him who is first and last, who died for us, and is living for ages of ages, to repeat for the last time words which had been frequently used before to His servants when they were awed by His presence, or when in His presence they were struck with some misfortune: 'Fear not.' In the presence of the everlasting love of Him who has the keys of death and Hades (verse 18), St. John is assured that he has not the least cause to *fear*. We have the same assurance; there will be a time, either in this world or the next, when we shall realize our need of the assurance. There is suggestiveness in the argument by which the command, 'Fear not,' is supported. It is not delicacy, as we should say, but love, that veils the great sacrifice which the eternal Word of God in heaven made in becoming a son of man; yet by tacitly assuming the security we may feel, owing to that sacrifice made by Him for us, He makes the allusion amply sufficient. St. John especially could not be unmindful of

the expansion of the same argument, which he had heard and recorded from his Lord's own lips (John xiv. 1 to 3). We have that record; and we have the promise of His perpetual presence with us, and there is no wisdom like that of faithfully walking in 'the way' (Acts xxiv. 14), and so making it our personal experience that He is with us, and that He is giving our hearts and minds a new existence, working a change beyond the power of any but our Creator to work, and making our new life grow as the vine branch grows from the graft, or the mustard plant springs up from the seed.

19.—St. John is instructed to write down what he then saw, and what the things represented, and what he was about to see; and, presumably, we have all this described in the book. The instruction links all together as one homogeneous revelation; and yet this vision of the seven churches is cut off from the rest, by the special mention of it here as seen by St. John while on earth, and by the removal of St. John to heaven (iv. 1, 2), where he sees the other visions. Indeed, the subjects of the two parts of the vision are distinct. One shows the Son of man's presence with His churches, while metaphorically sitting at the right hand of God, till God shall subdue His enemies; the other shows these enemies being subdued by God. We are aware that the tone of Christ's teaching while on earth prepared His followers for humiliation, and persecution, and the trampling of the unbelieving world—for a condition very different from the glorious kingdom that was taught and typified under the first covenant. But that glorious kingdom is not a thing abandoned, as if it were a wrong conception or impossible. As the age goes on, it approaches its realization. Meanwhile, Christ's rules still hold; His way is still the right way; it is neither He nor His followers who are to make His enemies His footstool (Ps. cx. 1, quoted *five* times in the New Testament). It is a wonderful kingdom, in that it is conquered

not *by*, but *for*, the King ; in that God, by the forces of which we have symbolical pictures from the fourth chapter to the twentieth, will both give the subjects (John xvii. 6, etc.) and destroy the enemies. We only need to be careful not to push this type, or symbol, of a kingdom, and enemies, and war, and judgments unduly. We cannot but notice that, as the age goes on, the symbolization mixes up the action of the Lamb, identifying it more and more with that of God. He is prepared to accept the kingdom as God may be pleased to give it to Him, and His true servants will be equally ready. Meantime, all the teaching and directions given us by Christ—His way and His promises—stand firm, and are our wisdom and strength ; and on that account this part of the vision of Christ and His churches on earth comes first in its importance to us. God's dealings with the dwellers upon earth may be more varied, and need longer descriptions. But, after all, Christ's dealings with His Church, and with His Church in the world, are of supreme interest to us.

NOTE ON VERSE 20.

The Son of man explains to St. John the secret of the seven stars and seven lampstands. The stars are angels, or emissaries from God, of the seven churches, and the lampstands are seven churches. We infer that the church here represented is an organized body, accepted as His congregation, enlightened and enabled to give light by His grace ; and forming a body whose temper, mind, knowledge, trust, and pleasure do not profess to rest on earthly things, and do not draw existence from earth, but do draw existence and support from heaven. The symbol (of this spiritual life of a church), then, is an angel, not a beast. The angel never speaks, nor is spoken to. St. John alone is addressed, and these angels are to be reached only by his writings. The angel of any particular church may die (iii. 2), and the lampstand may be removed (ii. 5).

CHAPTER II.

ORIGINAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

- 1 To the angel of the Church in Ephesus write :—
He who holds the seven stars in his right hand ;
who walks about in the midst of the seven golden
lampstands, says as follows ;—
- 2 I know thy works, and thy trouble and endurance ;
and that thou canst not carry bad (men), and didst
test those who call themselves apostles—and are not
3 —and foundest them false ; and hast endurance, and
didst carry, on account of my name, and hast not
been tired.
- 4 But I have against thee that thou didst let go thy
5 first love. Remember, then, whence thou hast fallen,
and repent, and do the first works : and if not, I am
coming to thee, and shall move thy lampstand out of
6 its place, unless thou shouldest repent. But thou hast
this ; that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans,
which I also hate.
- 7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit
says to the churches :—To him who conquers, I shall
give him to eat out of (from) the tree of life, which is
in the paradise of God.
- 8 And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write :—
The first and the last, who became dead, and lived,
says as follows :—
- 9 I know thy oppression, and poverty, but thou art

rich, and the blasphemy out of those who call themselves Jews—and they are not, but Satan’s synagogue. Do not thou fear what thou art about to suffer : behold the Devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you should be tried ; and you will have oppression of ten days. Become thou faithful up to death ; and I shall give thee the crown of life.

11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches :—‘ He who conquers will be by no means injured out of (by) the second death.’

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamus write :—
He who has the double-edged sharp broadsword says as follows :—

13 I know where thou dwellest, viz., where (there is) the throne of Satan : and thou holdest my name ; and didst not deny faith in me, even in the days of Antipas—my faithful martyr (he was)—who was killed beside you, where Satan dwells.

14 But I have against thee a few things : that thou hast there men holding the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to throw a trap in front of the sons of
15 Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. Thus, even thou hast men holding the teaching of Nicolaitans in like manner.

16 Repent thou, then ; and if not, I am coming to thee quickly, and shall make war with them with the broadsword of my mouth.

17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches :—‘ To him who conquers—I shall give to him some of the hidden manna ; and shall give him a bright pebble, and upon the pebble a new name written, which no one knows, except he who receives it.’

18 And to the angel of the church in Thyateira write :—

The son of God, who has his eyes as if a flame of fire—and his feet (are) like bronze, says as follows:—

19 I know thy works ; and thy love, and faith, and
20 ministration, and endurance : and thy last works
(are) more than the first. But I have against thee,
that thou didst let go the woman Jezebel : she, calling
herself a prophetess, also teaches and leads astray my
21 servants to commit fornication, and to eat things
sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time, that she
should repent ; and she does not wish to repent out
22 of her fornication : see ! I am throwing her into a
bed, and those who commit adultery with her into
23 great oppression, unless they shall repent out of her
works ; and I shall kill her children with death : and
all the churches will learn to know that I am (one)
24 who searches kidneys and hearts, and shall give you,
each, according to your works. But I say to you, the
rest in Thyateira, as many as have not this teaching,
they who did not learn to know the depths of Satan,
25 as they say,—I am not throwing upon you other
burden : only, what you have, hold until whenever I
shall come.

26 And he who conquers, and keeps my works up to
27 the end :—I shall give him authority over the nations ;
and he will tend (rule) them with an iron staff ; like
as vessels of pottery are (they) crushed ; like as also
28 I have received from my Father. And I shall give
29 him the star of the morning. He who has an ear, let
him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

THE MESSAGES OF THE LIVING CHRIST.

SECTION I. VERSES I TO 7. THE MESSAGE TO
EPHESUS.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

2.—THY WORKS. Of these works the trouble, toil, and endurance are noticed (see verse 19, note).

TEST. 'Try,' 'put to trial;' the word that is so frequently translated 'tempt.'

CALL THEMSELVES, or 'say of themselves'; it is a verb continually used of names and interpretations (e.g., John i. 39, 48; iv. 5; ix. 11; xix. 13, 17).

3.—CARRY, 'lift up,' 'hold in one's hands,' also of *bearing* things in mind. St. John records our Lord's use of the word (John xvi. 12), and St. Matthew puts it into Isaiah's mouth (Matt. viii. 17), but upon no known authority. The construction is, 'and hast, and didst carry, endurance on account of,' etc. This, however, is not in St. John's style.

4.—LET GO. A Greek verb often translated *forgive*, and the only Greek verb that is translated *forgive* in our New Testament versions. The Greek verb, like the English *give* and *forgive*, may take two accusative cases. In *giving*, or *forgiving*, the first essential, expressed or understood, is that there be something to give; and the second, that there be some one to give it to; but the Greek verb does not require more than one essential, viz., the thing *let go*, or 'forgiven.' For instance, to take St. John's uses of the word, omitting none, from the beginning of his Gospel: John iv. 3, 'He *left* (or let go) Judea, and departed into Galilee;' iv. 28, 'The woman *left* (or let go) her waterpot;' iv. 52, 'The fever *left* him (let him go);' viii. 29, 'He hath not *left* me (let me go) alone;' x. 12, 'And *leaveth* the sheep (lets the sheep go);'

xi. 44, 'Loose him, and *let him go* to depart' (translated merely 'let him go'); xi. 48, 'If we *let Him* thus *alone* (let Him go thus), all men will believe in Him;'; xii. 7, '*Suffer her* (let her go) to keep it;'; xiv. 18, 'I will not *leave you* (let you go) desolate;'; xiv. 27, 'I *leave* peace with you (let it go to you);'; xvi. 28, 'I *leave* (or let go) the world, and go to the Father;'; xvi. 32, 'And shall *leave me* (let me go) alone;'; xviii. 8, '*Let these go* their way.' This is a case in which the sense is almost identical with that of the 'forgiveness' of sins—letting them go clear away: xx. 23, 'Whose soever sins ye forgive (let go), they are forgiven (let go) to them.' It is interesting thus to review every instance in which St. John uses the word in his Gospel, as showing that there is no peculiar appropriation of the word to *forgiveness* of sins.

5.—REPENT: *Change thy opinion and purpose.* The Greek word appears to have no meaning of doing so *with sorrow or regret*, as the English word *repent* has; but the Israelites expressed *repentance* publicly by tokens of sorrow (so Job xlii. 6), as a child often does. In the Old Testament the notion of *repentance* came to be associated with the opinion or purpose changed from, and this of course involves regret; in the New Testament, with the opinion or purpose changed to, and this of course involves joy in heaven and earth. The change of heart or mind, which is hidden to our fellow-men, and precedes the change of purpose and action, is another thing. It is worthy of notice that the Hebrew word translated *repent* in the Old Testament is never translated in the LXX. by the Greek word which is translated *repent* in the New Testament. Indeed, they are totally different things, as is obvious from the fact that, in the Old Testament, 'repentance' is freely applied to God.

7.—WHAT is in the singular number, and therefore can hardly refer to the preceding address to the angel of Ephesus, which would require a plural pronoun. It quite

naturally applies to the proclamation which here follows, and declares the message to be addressed to every individual in all the churches.

TREE. This is not the ordinary word for tree, but is generally used for converted timber, as in spears or staves (Matt. xxvi. 47), or for Christ's cross (Acts v. 30); but it is used in the LXX. for all the fruit-trees in the Garden of Eden (Gen. ii. 9), and it is similarly used by St. John in his Revelation.

PARK, or *garden*, or *pleasure-ground*, is merely the English of *paradise*, as the word was found in use in Persia by Xenophon (B.C. 400). The Persian word was adopted into the Hebrew, and afterwards into the Greek, and through the Greek and Hebrew into the English, gathering ever new and fanciful meanings, which had better be avoided.

Expository Notes.

1.—We notice that 'holding the stars in His right hand' is figurative, and does not encumber the Son of man in the use of His right hand (i. 17). Indeed, the figures used are symbolic hieroglyphs, such as might be drawn on a blackboard by a lecturer to an illiterate audience, in order to keep before their minds the characteristics attributed to the subject by the lecturer. No further characteristics of the subject, so figured, should be drawn from the figure, beyond those which the lecturer attributed to it; nor does any part of the figure indicate any reality in the subject beyond that which the part symbolizes. The symbolic sword proceeding out of the mouth does not prevent the figure speaking; nor does the form of the dragon, nor of the beasts, prevent actions being attributed to them which are inconsistent with the powers of a snake, or of a beast. The holding the stars in His right hand represents secure and special protection (1 Kings xviii. 46; and compare Is. xl. 12).

As to the precedence given to Ephesus, it may be said that some one of the seven churches must be first, and naturally the one which was the metropolitan church of Asia, and the place of St. John's prolonged residence, would come first. The title the Son of man assumes is one which would be specially suitable to the church which was first addressed. It is rather far-fetched to assume that the detection of false prophets applies specially to Ephesus because it selected the teachers for the other six churches. In the plainest imagery possible the title claims for the Son of man the living and active headship of all the seven churches.

2.—**THY WORKS.** Repentance is almost always associated with works, from the beginning of St. John the Baptist to the end of St. John the Evangelist—works mostly of bodily action, but often of mental action when these are closely connected with bodily action in word or work. As we are to be finally judged by our words and works (Matt. xii. 37; xx. 12, 13), it would be obviously insincere to preach, as essential to salvation, or as securing God's approval, anything which falls short of influencing our words and works. The word *works* in the New Testament includes, as in English, all actions and deeds, but does not at all imply that what we call *work*, *i.e.*, *toil* or *hard work*, is used for their execution. We have no word exactly corresponding to the Greek; but *work* is quite intelligible enough, and is often used in English in exactly the New Testament sense, as in the phrase, 'Ah, I see that is *your work*!' applied either to a task or to an accidental action.

3.—The carrying of a load or burden is applied to the Ephesian church in a way which indicates that they were unable to tolerate the teachers, or the brotherhood, who assumed apostolic authority. It would have been impossible, even at the close of St. John's life, for any persons to have asserted that they were actually apostles,

appointed as such by the Lord Jesus Himself. This church is approved for having tested the words or deeds of such claimants, and for throwing them over when upon trial they found them false. In the cause of Christ, however, this church did carry burdens, and did not tire of the trouble. It is curious that in the Greek the words here translated 'tire' and 'trouble' are the verb and noun, as if we could say, 'I know that thou puttest thyself to trouble on account of my name, but thou wast not troubled.' That is hardly English; but it is a common thing for a person, when he is thanked for any trouble that he has taken, to reply, 'Oh, it's no trouble at all.' That is just the notion conveyed here. Christ is represented as saying that the trouble which He approved—'on account of His name'—and which had been incurred by this church, was no real trouble, or toil, or weariness to them, and it is this fact which secures supreme approval.

The huge, antichristian structure of penance, self-torture, secret or ostentatious feats of toilsome, irksome, and even crippling idleness, raised by false apostles, is swept away by these two verses.

4.—The fault of this Ephesian church lies in their having let go their first love. *Letting go* is the same Greek word as is translated in the Authorized and Revised Versions *forgiving*; and its use here is an illustration of what should be borne in mind whenever we ask God's forgiveness of any sin. The full forgiveness of sin involves that we are set completely free from the sin itself, and from the love of it. Relapses are only too possible; but a relapse does not necessarily prove hypocrisy in the previous repentance.

We see that the church is called not merely to act, to work, as if it loved God, but to repent, so as really to love Him, and to act accordingly. Unless this be done, the Ephesians will be no longer acknowledged by Christ as His church. That more is required by Christ than mere

hatred of what is disgraceful and ungodly, is shown by the notice which immediately follows (verse 6), of their hating the Nicolaitans.

6.—From what is said by St. John concerning these Nicolaitans, we may infer that, while professing to be Christians, and accepted by Christ, they knew so little of the life in Him that they could practise iniquity, and openly teach that such practice was not inconsistent with their profession. A generation or two later, Irenæus (who died about A.D. 200) says that the founder of this sect was Nicolas, one of the seven deacons (Acts vi. 5); and another generation later Tertullian (who died about A.D. 240) confirms this explanation.

We may here notice that the schools of false teaching, and of a degrading standard of morals, against which the Son of man inveighs in these letters to the churches, do not include Pharisees or Sadducees, of whom our Lord taught His disciples to beware. It is as if those schools had been cast out of the religious world, on the ruin of Jerusalem. They took no place as sects within the Christian Church, and if their hypocrisy and formal practices remained, they did so under new names. The types of evil teaching presented in these letters to the churches are Nicolas, an Antiochene Christian; Balaam, a Syrian prophet; and Jezebel, a Syrian princess. The two first tried to use an acknowledgment of the true God, a literal observance of His commands, and a profession of His teaching, as a salve to their consciences; while in will and conduct they followed sensual indulgences. The last, Jezebel, defied the true God and His servants, and set up gods of her own choice, avowedly antagonistic to them.

7.—The last clause is one of encouragement, and it is given, not by Christ, but by one of the seven Spirits (i. 4), and it is in exact harmony with the title of the *Encourager* or *Comforter*, which was first given by St. John as our

Lord's title for the Holy Spirit (John xiv. 16, 26). The clause is addressed, not to the Ephesians only, but to all the churches, as is that at the close of each letter. It is heralded by a call to every single person, in or out of the churches, to attend to it. It is presented parabolically, and it is similar to the counsels given by Christ to His disciples when He spoke to them in symbols (Matt. xi. 15; xiii. 43) or in parables (Mark iv. 9); though the actual expression never occurs in any of St. John's own writings, except in this book. Perhaps this call occurs nowhere with more awful solemnity and force than after the warnings, and before the promises, addressed to these churches; and its abrupt address to every hearer, at the close of a letter sent through its angel to the whole church, assures to it no less authority than it would have if it were addressed by Christ in person to each one of us. Such tender solicitude the Son of man shows, when addressing the churches, to bring the encouragement and promise of His Spirit, the Comforter, home to the heart and understanding of each one who hears, or reads these letters.

The promise is 'to him who conquers,' or overcomes. What is to be conquered is left undefined; but it must include whatever would bar us from Christ, or from heaven. The phrase follows close after Christ's threatened withdrawal of the lampstand, and the mention of His hatred of those Nicolaitans; and, from Tertullian's description, we may venture to say the Nicolaitans taught that no conduct could deprive a man of ultimate pardon, and reception into heaven. They held that evil conduct might be indulged in by a true Christian as a permissible pleasure. St. John uses the word 'conquer' when our Saviour says that He has *conquered* the world, and will support in peace those who have to bear oppression in the world (John xvi. 33). St. Paul uses it in reference to evil of all kinds (*e.g.*, Rom. xii. 21). The promise here made to the conqueror is that he shall share the fruit of the tree

of life that was in Eden (Gen. iii. 22, etc.). All we know of this tree is found in Genesis iii. 22. He who should eat of its fruit would 'live for ever,' which probably means would live in some sense a higher life than that in which fallen man unaided could live.

The punishments that are threatened deserve careful notice. There is no active punishment: nothing like revenge or torture. The threat is made by implication, and it is just the punishment inflicted on Adam, viz., that he should *not* be admitted into paradise, nor permitted to eat of the tree of life. It seems a parable similar to that spoken by our Lord, and recorded by St. Luke (Luke xiii. 25), of the Master of the house getting up and shutting-to the door. But it omits mention of the false plea, or of the terrible wretchedness of those who were shut out. We are not here invited to analyze, or to attempt to judge, the excuses or the sorrow which Adam might have made and felt, or of those now who sin against greater light than Adam had.

Again, if we turn to the punishment with which the church was threatened (verse 5), viz., the removal of the lampstand, it is clear that the lampstand, though representing the church (i. 20), represents not the persons composing the church, but the visible temper and ordinances which the church unites to maintain before God. The forgiveness, repentance, grace, and power of the church, all of which are from God, shine in the lampstand. The Gospel light thrown abroad by an accepted church is symbolized by seven lamps, as God's Spirit afterwards is (iv. 5). The *lampstand* is not fixed by any outward confession or Scripture phrase of man, but by Christ's direct action.

SECTION II. VERSES 8 TO 11. THE MESSAGE TO
SMYRNA.

Exegetical, or Critical Notes.

8.—AND LIVED. St. John seems loth to use the term *rose again*, or *re-lived*, or similar term, when he describes any being or organization as apparently perishing and then reviving. Neither our Lord nor His apostles use the word *dead*, except as a current colloquial term, to apply to men, or organizations, whose physical, material bodies are dead, but whose *lives*, the same word in Greek as *souls*, remain. They may speak of these lives as being 'departed,' or 'asleep,' or 'unclothed.'

9.—BLASPHEMY: originally a *word of evil omen*, as at a sacrifice; hence commonly used for *speech conveying misrepresentation or slander*. Here, after *blasphemy*, understand *against thee*.

OUT OF: *arising out of*. These self-called Jews are the Adversary's synagogue; and out of them the slanderer propagates blasphemies, and by them he acts, in order to imprison.

10.—DEVIL: the Greek word Anglicized, meaning the 'slanderer.'

Expository Notes.

8.—The title asserts never-failing continuance, like the Mosaic 'I am'—confirmed by the recently proved victory of the Son of man over death, such as we understand it; shown by His having died and risen again, and by His subsequent support of His servants by unprecedented gifts and signs, exercised since His death.

9.—In what follows we cannot separate the sentences in *thou* and *you*, so as to apply the *thou* to the guardian angel, and the *you* to the members of the church. We are, therefore, here grammatically forced to the conclusion

before indicated; neither the *star*, *angel*, *lampstand*, nor *church* represents men and women, though the people, guided by the one and united by the other, may be referred to under the name of either. Compare the use of the word *chivalry* with that of *church* here. *Chivalry* was not an assembly nor a club, but as it implies laws and qualifications held and acted on by men, the word is often used of the *men*. The leader or guide of a body of men is also often used as a name to denote the body of men under his influence. In this letter the church in Smyrna is told that the oppression inflicted on them, their poverty and the misrepresentation from which they suffer, are all due to persons professing to be the chosen and accepted people of God. They all are known to God, and they will continue for a time, imprisonment and persecution being added to them. Though unable to promise them release and earthly reward in this life, yet the Son of man can give a security and promise which none other is so well qualified to give, since He Himself had gone, voluntarily, through the greatest suffering from oppression, poverty, slander, and persecution, in order that He might save His servants who trust in Him. In this case His servants are told that they will not be saved from passing through these trials and this poverty and blasphemy in this world, but they are assured that they need not fear them. They are taught, what our Lord also taught (John xv. 20), that His own disciples would follow Him in the experience of suffering on earth, and be sharers of His life and glory in heaven. The slanderer, the devil and his agents, will imprison, torture and slay them, in what is called an oppression of ten days—perhaps meaning a time long enough for the complete trial, and as short as would constitute a sufficient sample of all kinds of trial. In Gen. xxiv. 55, Milcah and Laban try to persuade Abraham's servant to stay a 'few days, at the least ten,' as if ten days were enough, and barely enough, for a complete

exhibition of hospitality. Also see Dan. i. 12, where ten days is proposed and accepted as sufficient to make a trial of a pulse diet. The *crown* doubtless refers to the crowning of the victor after successful battle or competition.

11.—The subscription by one of the Spirits to all the churches assures each one who conquers that there is no possibility of injury to him by the second death (xxi. 8, etc.). It is the Greek form of the most absolute negative. Indeed, this gives us an assurance having a double bearing; for if we have the assurance that the power of Christ will save us from receiving any injury from the 'second death,' then we may surely trust the command to fear nothing from the trials and sufferings of the first death.

SECTION III. VERSES 12 TO 17. THE MESSAGE TO PERGAMUS.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

14.—THINGS SACRIFICED TO IDOLS. What is meant by this may be understood from 1 Cor. viii. 1-9, and especially x. 28. The term includes animal or vegetable food, burnt by proxy—*i.e.*, a pinch or saucerful of it—to some god, and thus dedicated to be eaten in his worship, or under his protection.

16.—WITH: *armed with*. The word is literally *in*, and is frequently used of means or implements, more so by the Greeks than by us, though we do talk of a man being *up in arms*. The same word was used by some of the apostles (Luke xxii. 49), 'Shall we strike *in* (translated *with*) the sword?' See on ii. 27.

17.—PEBBLE. Almost exactly translated. The Greek word means a small waterworn stone, technically applied to set jewels and to stones in mosaic work; but the Greeks also called 'pebbles' stones that were used for

other purposes, such as counters for reckoning, or *men* in games like draughts, and especially for voting by dropping stones into an urn similar to our ballot-box. The stones would be distinguished by colour, or by some inscription. In voting such stones were used to decide criminal or civil trials, but not for elections. The stone bore a mark which showed whether it was for or against the defendant. No engraved pebble with a name or design written on it is known, except seals, seal-rings, and the pebbles that were parts of the high priest's insignia in the Mosaic ritual.

Expository Notes.

12.—The title asserts that from the owner's mouth, *i.e.*, displayed and exercised through all His creation, works, and words, comes a keen, irresistible discrimination of right from wrong, truth from falsehood, sham from real, justice from injustice.

13.—The word *dwelllest* is that which is always used for those who *inhabit* the earth, or *the inhabitants* of the earth. This church inhabits a country which Satan also inhabits, and in which he has set up his throne. Smyrna was tried by false professors, who assumed religious authority. Here we have a direct opposition by the prince of darkness himself. But the angel of Pergamus held Christ's name, and this includes holding to His character, His claims, His promises, and His patience. Like the three Babylonian exiles, the church had refused to bow to the idol, even though that idol were Satan himself on his throne, and they persisted in the refusal even though one of their number was martyred at their side.

14.—But there were in the church some who sought to draw away the church from this faithful constancy, even so far as to get them to bow to the image, or at least to join in the festivals and the abandonment connected with idolatrous feast times. The ordinary routine of sacrifice,

as at present in use, is as follows. Those who join in the picnic, or community of revel, meet together, bringing their contributions of cattle, sheep, and other things needed for the festival. A portion of these, such as the blood and offal of the slain, or a pinch or dash of each kind of food, just as it is, cooked or raw, is offered up, generally by fire—partly by the priests or leaders, and partly by each individual—before the idol which represents the demon whose favour and aid they thus seek or acknowledge. In heathen nations the majority of these festivals are chaste and social, but apparently it was only the riotous sort of revelry which was alluring, and it was the riotous sort which gave rise to the common hatred of the Christians, because they refused to join in them (1 Pet. iv. 3, 4). But what roused the indignation of the Roman magistrate, when he sought in a quiet way to overcome the difficulty created by the Christians, was their persistent refusal to make any offering of any kind to an idol, though he endeavoured to make the matter as unobjectionable as it could possibly be. A mere pinch of frankincense thrown on the idol's altar was accepted as enough to acquit the accused, and to release him from a sentence of torture and death. No doubt, in whatever form the temptation may come to make God's worship subordinate to the worship of other things, there may be found Balaams who will support and aggravate the temptation.

16.—The call to 'repent' is made in order to encourage the faith of those who are tempted, or have fallen. The punishment threatened on those who sin like Balaam or the Nicolaitans may be that described in xix. 11, 15. It is the business of the angel, to whom the call to repent is addressed, and of those who are guided by him, to purify the church from teaching such as Balaam's, and from members who have been ensnared by such teaching; but it is clear that this will never be effectively and completely

done until the Son of man comes Himself and makes war with these sinners. This punishment is described as coming quickly, and as even now on the road. All is preparing for the separation of the bad from the good—for a war with, and a victory over, the bad—not by any catastrophe, but by regular and orderly approach, and by the perfect effect of the Word of God—of His laws, by which the nature of things is established and ruled; and of His inspired Word, revealed to His servants during this age. It is not the *mercy* of the Son of man which is here said to be coming, but His *justice*; and that, though its nature is fixed, will be developed and unfolded in its manifestation. Its action, and its apprehension by those in heaven and earth, will grow till it is ‘quickly’ revealed in its full glory.

17.—Thus quickly will arrive the condemnation of those who are conquered by these wiles. But the conqueror has not to wait even so long for reward. To him who remains true under these insidious and blasting temptations, a secret, but apparently immediate, reward is promised. Others may fail to see it. The bread sustaining him will be the special gift of God; like the manna in the wilderness, always just enough, and never too much, to be freely and unsparingly used. This divine sustenance is to be hidden—known only to himself, and fed upon without companionship (compare the parable of the virgins, Matt. xxv. 9). So our Lord fed on the bread He had to eat, of which His disciples had no knowledge (John iv. 32). While this utterly falsifies the assumed power of some religious sects to discern who have, and who have not, sustenance from this manna, we may remember how our Lord had founded the sacrament of His supper, to recall to our minds not only the promise of such manna, but also the companionship we have and feel, through our knowledge that all those around us who are conquering are doing so on the same food. The glistening ballot-

pebble, or voting stone, or stone of admission to heaven, or whatever it be, has on it a new name, revealed to the knowledge and experience of the owner only. This possibly implies that conviction of the truth of Christ's teaching (represented by a Name), which is promised to each one who wishes to do God's will (John vii. 17). This, as it can only be learnt direct from God, no one can explain to another, or gain from the teachings of another.

SECTION IV. VERSES 18 TO 29. THE MESSAGE
TO THYATEIRA.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

18.—THYATEIRI, and in verse 24: literally, the *Thyateirians*. This doubtless stands for the *Thyateira* of i. 11.

19.—MINISTRATION: just the kind of work the seven deacons, literally ministers, were appointed to do (Acts vi. 5).

THY WORKS: of these the four most noteworthy are given. The strong characteristic of the whole Revelation may be seen here. St. John's meaning of *works* we should rather call the tone, mind, temper, or spirit which produces certain works. He calls *these* things 'works.' So, what he means by *beast, kingdom, harlot*, etc., is the tone, mind, temper, or spirit which makes such organizations; not the men who worship them, or the physical acts which such men do under their influence.

20.—DIDST LET GO: perhaps in the sense in which St. John uses the word in xi. 48 (see note on ii. 4). There is the same construction in Matt. viii. 15 and 22.

20.—WOMAN. The evidence of one of the three oldest MSS. is in favour of *wife*, instead of *woman*.

23.—LEARN TO KNOW, or *perceive*. The slang word *twig* is in our dictionaries in this sense; and no other English word is quite equivalent to the Greek. The

phrase *learn to know*, cautiously used, seems quite effective.

24.—BUT: *on the other hand*.

27.—THOU WILT TEND THEM—not the flock, but the nations—in (or *with*, see ii. 16, note) a staff of iron. *Thou wilt tend them* (the nations and uttermost parts of the earth) *with a staff of iron: thou wilt crush them as potters' vessels*, is a literal translation of Psalm ii. 9 in the LXX., the Hebrew of which appears to be *thou breakest them*, etc., perhaps meaning *thou rulest them*. Hence the tending, breaking, or ruling has for its object the governed, and not enemies, or others, outside the government's or the shepherd's charge, but within it.

Expository Notes.

18.—The title claims the rank of *Son of God* as accepted by Christ at His trial before the Sanhedrim (Matt. xxvi. 63), and as given Him by a voice from heaven at His baptism (Matt. iii. 17), and at His transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 5). The symbol of His power of sight is likened to the brightest element, and of His power of movement to the hardest and toughest metal (gun-metal, as we call it) then recognised.

19.—The special *works* of this angel seem all to be simple virtues with a general application: the *love* will include love to God, to His creation, and to His works; and love to man, to his calling, and to his honest work—righteous works (1 John. iii. 7) in contrast to Cain's temper, as described by St. John a few verses on (1 John, iii. 12). The *faith* would be proved by sincere and responsible behaviour towards God, His creation, and His providence; and towards man, whether superior or dependent, whether brought into formal, and perhaps distant acquaintance, or born into the closest and most familiar kinship. So the *ministration* includes all the duties of our clerical *ministers*, and all good offices to those around

us, above us, or below us, to whom we have opportunity to minister, and who even crave our ministrations; but it especially includes the doing with our might whatever we do, as God who has called us to do it, and has promised us His grace in the doing of it, would have it done. The *endurance* is in Greek, literally, *remaining under*, the English of which, *keeping it up*, illustrates the different genius of the two languages. The word is by no means limited to passive virtue, but includes all manner of endurance in, and *holding on under*, the exercise of active virtue, within us or without us, at home or outside. Not only did the temper of the church set up and act upon these virtues, but it is described as having increased in such spiritual activity.

Yet in this church the temptations and persecutions previously mentioned, whether of those professing to be in the covenant, or of those professedly hostile, is replaced by a trial of another kind. The time of persecution in the third church, Pergamus, naturally favoured the teaching of Balaam, and the success of any plausible persuasion to consider a formal compliance with the magisterial tests to be no harm. Persecution would also favour the temptation to comply with the social expectations (1 Pet. iv. 4) of those professedly hostile to Jesus. This (fourth) church is warned against allurements, by God's enemies, to open rebellion against Him—warned against the temptation to profess a fanciful belief, along with unrestrained conduct.

It scarcely seems likely that *Jezebel* represents a single person on earth: if so, it would be the only case in the book in which a city or person is represented by a symbolic name. The description of her punishment is inconsistent with that of an *individual*, and agrees with the symbolic description elsewhere given in this book, of the punishment of a *school of teaching and its adherents*. The time given Jezebel to repent, when it is foreseen that she

will not, involves no more inconsistency than the time given the whole world to repent, when it is foreseen that it will not have done so before its end comes. The time to repent will be taken advantage of by thousands of Jezebel's votaries, or subjects, as of the world's inhabitants. The teaching of Jezebel existed before that queen lived; and something very like it led astray Aaron and the Israelites during Moses' absence on Mount Sinai (Ex. xxxii.). It is here foretold that it will become a special temptation to the church again, in some special and organized form, as it once was in the time of that queen. The particular form of the temptation offered by Jezebel herself has, under the punishment of God, been eradicated from the organized Mosaic church; and it seems that the new form of the teaching, which Jezebel here represents, will be eradicated from the professing church again, by as severe a punishment of those led astray by her as was before effective when inflicted upon the Israelites, through the instrumentality of the Assyrian kings.

23.—Those who reject the temptations of Jezebel will then have acquired a new knowledge of the heart-searching God; much as St. Peter (2 Pet. i. 5 to 8) describes all our apprenticeship in virtue, endurance, and other works of the Spirit, as culminating in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. On those who escaped the temptations, and never learnt to know the depths of Satan, Christ places no new weight, either on account of Jezebel's or of any other temptation. His yoke is easy: it is that they should be the children of the Almighty, and live under the privileges of his fatherly adoption, given us by the Spirit of Him who raised up Christ from the dead (Rom. viii. 11). The essential conditions of this He cannot lessen, and will not increase. St. John seems to have on his mind, and almost on his pen, the first decision of the apostles and elders of the Jewish Christian Church in

Jerusalem (Acts xv. 20); and the subsequent decree of the church (verse 29), accepting the churches of the Gentiles to their communion, and laying a burden on them, as a condition of communion, which in strictness of letter exceeded that of our Saviour, that of Moses, or even their own customary conditions of communion, so far as we know them. A human council is bound to take care to be on the right side; to be too restrictive rather than too loose. The key to Christ's freedom (Gal. v. 1) is the being actuated by His Spirit (2 Cor. iii. 17); and they who are so actuated can hardly be said to bear a burden (Matt. xi. 30) at all that is laid upon them by Christ, since their burden arises mainly from their own imperfection. It seems very unlikely that the *burden* here represents any particular burden, or decree of the church in Jerusalem, or elsewhere; it is not St. John's usual style to mix up symbols with realities.

26.—The subscription assures to every conqueror who keeps Christ's works to the end authority over the nations—probably the idea is the same as that of the court outside the temple (xi. 2). All ranks of Christendom are referred to, all persons who were not saints—rulers, traders, and workers; literate and illiterate; originally natives of the soil within the old Roman empire, or recently brought into the system and polity of civilized nations.

It seems indeed a grand extension of spiritual life that is here seriously contemplated; an extension from the keeping of the ten, and other, literal commandments of the Old Covenant, to the power of observing, studying, and learning to know, *and to act*, the works of the Creator and maintainer of the seen and unseen universe. That the words mean this, there is no room to doubt. Miserably poor as, in our present condition, seem to be our attempts to keep the commands of the Son of God, we are bound to keep them, as He kept those of His Father (John ix. 4; x. 25; xiv. 12, etc.); and we shall find a long

era foretold in this book, during which the crowned King of kings (xix. 12), and Christ will be the saints who have conquered and died during which the (xx. 4). As Christ's power, even in will reign with Him earth, extended over spirit and matter His humiliation on the like), so must the power of those (Matt. ix. 6, and For us now, even were it barely possible who reign with Him. on to the first rung of the ladder, yet visible for us to climb knowledge and power in spiritual ;t a faithful pursuit of a heavenly pursuit ; and to neglect, and material things is applies, at least as bad as that of ; is conduct, so far as it his lord's talent (Matt. xxv. 25). the servant who buried ignorance, to obstruct, or confuse For one of us, in our others whom our Saviour is encour, or discourage wilfully rebellion of the citizens (Luke xix, praging is as bad as the have their Lord reign over them. e 14, 27) who would not the Devil, the slanderer of Christ. The father of such is

It is presumptuous to despise, ist and of His servants. works in which God has delighted as beneath our attention, for us to consider His creation, ed for countless ages ; or ducting what He has created, as and His method of con- for our time and intelligence. n servile drudgery, too low bodily skill, to study and mede To acquire and practice matter, and the wonderful phen itate upon the laws of seek to know God by these wo, omena of nature, and to occupied David and his fellow-ir, ks and statutes of His, the carpenter, and St. John ; t, psalmists, Daniel, Christ among the Pharisees who looked t, but there were persons studies. t, contemptuously on such

It is here promised that the autic who conquer will be effective--no re, ority given to each of us no mere show ; no mere thinkin, h, mere bundle of phrases ; The simile used--that He will te, u, g much of one's self. inhabitants of Christendom), as a, n, d nations (that is, the is practical ; and the practical, shepherd does a flock-- declared by the simplest possible, e, force of this simile is description of it : He

will so tend them with an iron staff, like as earthenware pots are shivered. The simile includes the power to keep those in his charge from the presence of evil and danger, and to lead them where they will have all the food and comforts they need; that the power will be irresistible against evil, to break it up and destroy evil-doers as easily and completely as a potter, on drawing his kiln, smashes up all the evil pots which come misshapen from the fire; and, lastly, the simile includes evidence that there will be evil pots to be broken up; and that he who conquers will break them up. All this is thoroughly practical. It shows that the nations will be so ruled while still in a state of probation, liable to evil, as at present. All this, too, agrees with the description, later on, of Christ's reign for a thousand years.

The morning star, a term only used once elsewhere (xxii. 16) in the New Testament, seems to be a poetical, rather than a symbolical, figure. The morning star is the herald of the immediate approach of the sun. The promise does, at least, express that the rule of the conqueror will be a sign of, and will immediately precede, the complete glorification of the saints. We may incidentally notice that John Baptist is never called the morning star.

CHAPTER III.

ORIGINAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

- 1 AND to the angel of the Church in Sardeis write :—
He who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars says as follows :—
- 2 I know thy works ; that thou hast a name that
3 thou livest, and art dead. Become awake, and set
4 firm the things which are left which were about to
5 die : for I have not found thy works fulfilled in front
6 of my God. Remember then how thou didst receive,
7 and didst hear ; and keep, and repent. If ever, then,
thou shouldest not be awake, I shall come, as if a
thief ; and thou wilt by no means learn to know what
kind of hour I shall come upon thee. But thou hast
a few names in Sardeis which did not stain their
garments ; and they will walk about with me in
bright (garments), because they are worthy.
- 5 He who conquers—he will so clothe himself in
bright garments ; and I shall by no means wipe off
his name out of the Book of Life, and shall confess
his name in front of my Father, and in front of His
6 angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the
Spirit says to the churches.
- 7 And to the angel of the Church in Philadelphia write :
The true, the Saint, he who has David's key, he
who opens and no one will shut, and shuts and no
one will open, says as follows :—

- 8 I know thy works. See! I have given in front of thee
an opened door, which no one is able to shut; because
9 thou hast a little power, and didst keep my word, and
didst not deny my name. See! I am giving (some) out
of the synagogue of Satan who say themselves to be
Jews—and they are not, but lie—see! I shall make
them that they will come and salaam in front of thy feet,
10 and should learn to know that I loved thee. Because
thou didst keep the word of my endurance, I also
shall keep thee out of the hour of the trial about to
come on the whole world, to try those who dwell on
11 the earth. I am coming quickly; hold what thou
hast, that no one should take thy crown.
- 12 He who conquers: I shall make him a pillar in the
temple of my God; and he will by no means come
out outside any more; and I shall write upon him
the name of my God, and the name of the city of my
God, the new Jerusalem which is descending out of
heaven from my God, and my name, the new (one).
- 13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says
to the churches.
- 14 And to the angel of the Church in Laodicea write:
The Amen, the witness, the faithful and true, the
beginning of the creation of God, says as follows:—
- 15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot.
16 I would that thou wert cold or hot, so, because thou
art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about
17 to vomit thee out of my mouth. Because thou
sayest ‘I am rich, and have become rich, and have
need in nothing,’ and dost not know that thou art the
wretched, and pitiable, and poor, and blind, and naked.
- 18 I counsel thee to buy from me fired gold-ware out of
the fire, that thou shouldst grow rich; and bright
garments, that thou shouldst be clothed, and the
disgrace of thy nakedness should not be made visible;
and collyrium to anoint thine eyes, that thou shouldst

19 see. I—how many so ever I love—I convince and
 20 train; be zealous then, and repent. See! I stand
 upon the door and knock: if ever any one should
 hear my voice and open the door, I shall enter to
 him, and shall sup with him, and he with me.

21 He who conquers: I shall give to him to sit with
 me in my throne; as I also conquered, and sat with
 22 my Father in his throne. He who has an ear, let
 him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

THE MESSAGES OF THE LIVING CHRIST.

SECTION I. VERSES 1 TO 6. THE MESSAGE TO
 SARDEIS.

Exegetical and Critical Notes.

2.—WHAT may mean *what things* generally; but, as works only have been mentioned, and their character dwelt upon (ii. 2, 19, notes), it seems most reasonable to take *what* here to mean *what works*. St. James endeavours to explain something of this kind. He says that faith under trial works endurance (Jas. i. 3), and this St. John here (ii. 19) calls a *work*, and asks his readers to let endurance *have its perfect work*. And St. James further (Jas. ii. 18) explains how faith without works, meaning outward action, is *dead* (though there is nearly equal evidence for *barren*, the idea aimed at in either reading being much the same). St. John applies the word *work* to the faith and outward action both combined, and calls the work *dead*, if lacking exercise, or active expression.

WERE: *i.e.*, the things which at the time of your becoming awake, you find were about to die.

IN FRONT OF. The Greek preposition in the classics means *face to face with*, *in presence of*, persons only. In this book it is applied to material objects, such as to a

throne (iv. 5). When the omnipresent God is its object, it has an official sense (viii. 2), for which the two latter renderings seem too definite and materialistic.

3.—KEEP: apparently, keep what thou didst receive and hear.

WHAT KIND OF HOUR: or, as we should say, *the sort of outlook*; the indications which show that I am coming; just as farmers see that the *season* (which the Greeks called *hour*) for any particular agricultural operation is arriving.

4.—GARMENTS: those outer garments by which the nature of a man's employment, or his social or official positions, are ordinarily seen.

5.—BY NO MEANS. We have no English for this frequent and forcible expression; our colloquial and emphatic *never*, used without intentional reference to time, is the nearest. As a professor, unable to identify a doubtful shell, might perhaps be able to say: 'It's never a *nautilus*.'

BOOK. St. John uses three words for books, which are here translated *book*, *scroll*, and *little scroll*; perhaps *roll*, *scroll*, and *paper* would suit. Even in our times the names of book, volume, tract, pamphlet, etc., change from generation to generation. St. John only uses the word translated *book* of the '*Book of Life*'; and as that term is as old as Exodus xxxii. 32, it may be pictured as a papyrus book, all the leaves of which might be stiff; and, like the leaves of a Hindoo book that has been written on stiff palm-leaf, might turn horizontally round a peg or string, standing threaded through a round hole punched in the top left-hand corner of each leaf.

CONFESS: *i.e.*, *admit*, or *pass*.

7.—THE TRUE. Throughout the Book of Revelation the Greek word used by St. John means *agreeable to truth*, and includes the two ideas, *real* and *true*.

8.—SAINT, or *holy*. The meaning of the term to Jews may perhaps best be gathered from our Authorized

Version, or Revised Version, where *saint* and *holy* are almost always used to translate the same Greek word. It seems originally meant for *devoted to the gods*; and then, of persons who lived pious, pure lives, in reference to the will and sanctity of the gods.

9.—SOME: omitted in a similar manner 2 John 4.

SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN. We must not suppose that Satan existed *only* in the dragon, or beasts. Here he is described as setting the tone, temper, etc., which collects, and constitutes, a synagogue.

WHO: *i.e.*, the *synagogue*; but including the idea of the men *out of* it, that is, in part composing it.

SALAAM: to prostrate and cower like a dog before a potentate. As there is no word in our Gothic language for this kind of homage, an Anglo-Indian term is adopted. The ceremony is still observed in outlying Eastern states. But salaam is far more frequently used, metaphorically, for any kind of respectful salutation or homage, than for the literal grovelling ceremony.

10.—KEEP THE WORD OF MY ENDURANCE: see also verse 8, and John viii. 51, 52, 55; 1 John ii. 5, etc. It seems to mean always keeping Christ's word—His commands and teaching—being holy to Him. It may here mean His word as enjoining, and giving motive for, such patience, or endurance, as He Himself showed.

HOUR. Here again the word is used in its usual Greek sense, and we should carefully dissociate it from the mere indications of the clock.

THE WHOLE WORLD: literally, *the whole inhabited (earth)*; the word *earth* is not expressed. The phrase is never used afterwards for the symbolic *earth*, of the Roman empire, or of Christendom, and it need never be confused with it.

THOSE WHO DWELL ON THE EARTH is always used for those outside the professing churches. So St. Paul uses it (Acts xvii. 26). It may be so used in harmony with an expression in the LXX. (Lam. iv. 31): 'Rejoice and

be glad, daughter of Edom, who dwellest upon earth : the cup of the Lord will come through upon thee,' etc.

11.—TAKE : the same word is used by our Lord (Matt. v. 40) : ' If any man wishes to go to law with thee, and to *take*, or *receive*, thy coat (*chiton*),' etc. ; and has no idea of violence. It simply pictures that the crown, which might have been handed to you had you held what you had, may be handed by the Judge to another.

12.—TEMPLE : by this word the covered shrine—the holy and most holy places, as united by Christ's death—is always meant.

FROM : as the origin ; used of descent, not from immediate parents, or by visible, present production, so much as from an early origin. Somewhat as one would say, that the London Thames comes from Seven Springs, in Gloucestershire ; or that some Leicestershire farmer descends from a Plantagenet King. On the other hand, the previous preposition *out of* refers to the immediate and visible origin.

17.—NEED IN NOTHING, or *nothing (in the way of) need*. It is not *need of nothing*.

17.—THOU : the pronoun is emphatic.

NAKED : usually *stripped of armour*, or of 'garment' ; *undressed* ; literally *bare*.

19.—LOVE here is not the usual word, but a more affectionate one : *am fond of*. A man who *loves* wisdom may love philosophers ; but a man *fond of* it is a philosopher. Another word is translated *love* in John iii. 16.

CONVINCE. This Greek word seems originally to mean *put to shame, refute, convince* ; and so, speaking of a person, to *convict*.

TRAIN, or *instruct*, as a teacher does a boy.

20.—UPON : meaning simply *at*, but implying that it is not casual proximity, but necessary association for some object. The same preposition is similarly used for *upon the throne* (iv. 2) ; *upon the corners of the earth* (vii. 1), etc.

SUP: the Greek word is applicable to the chief meal of the day, whether at noon or evening. As a fact, the Jews generally took their chief meal after the day's work was done, between the evenings, or thereabouts.

Expository Notes.

I.—The first four churches are addressed on the subject of danger coming through the external relations of each member: (1) cessation of love to God; (2) calumny and imprisonment by people who profess to be God's peculiar people; (3) persecution and martyrdom for confessing their belief; (4) temptation to the luxury and self-indulgence which are out of harmony with Christ's way. But the fifth church is exposed to danger from the sleep and death of its own members. They are apt to be content with God's mercies; with whatsoever they can enjoy in this life, be it material, or intellectual, or spiritual; and with whatsoever is promised for the future life. For what besides need they care? They will sleep, and ultimately die, so. Death has less repulsiveness to them than activity. Selfishness is their only motive-power—the only thing that is alive in them, which may be almost said of a corpse.

The title expresses the power which the presence of the Son of man brings to a church through the perfect operation of His Spirit; and it refers also to the guardian messengers of guidance and instruction, whom the Son of man holds in His hand. Of the operations of the Spirit upon matter, life, and spirit, we may learn from almost every book of the Bible; of the operations of a guardian angel, we have a type in him who led the Israelites through the wilderness into Canaan (Exod. xxiii. 20), as recorded in the Old Testament.

There are still the embers of spiritual life, such as a child could blow into flame; there are still remnants of bodily and spiritual powers which are capable of being

set firm and secured ; but there needs the will to be directed to them, and the understanding to be opened to discern their true value. The way of escape to life is shown ; the whole power of God is offered to effect the rescue ; the argument most likely to reach such people is touchingly enforced by a solemn assertion of their danger, and an appeal to their sense of self-preservation ; if this fail, their end will come unexpectedly.

4.—In this inactive church, too, are some who seek to be *innocent*, and who perhaps fulfil the requirements of Jehovah (Micah vi. 8), by doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly in Christ's way. However such may have come short of the spiritual life and gifts that were open to them, they, like him who earned five pounds (Luke xix. 18), will be made rulers in Christ's kingdom, and clothed in bright garments, of perfect whiteness, because they are worthy. To stop here to explain how far they are worthy in comparison to God, and whether God can or cannot create a being with so much of His own power in him as to be capable of independent action, and therefore of worth, would be as unreasonable as to stop an astronomer in his revelation of the mysteries and glories of the heavenly bodies, until he should have first explained whether infinite space be spherical or cubical.

5.—He who conquers ; who has kept the life in the things that were left barely alive. There is here a disconnection, as if the speaker, having his mind filled with some such feeling as that of the father of the returned prodigal (Luke xv. 22), paused, in order to place fully on record the sure reward which even the least gifted, the merest spiritual infant, of these who were worthy, would receive. However that may be, the reward will be the full entry of his name in the Book of Life, and his full recognition by the Son of man before the Father and His angels at the final judgment.

SECTION II. VERSES 7 TO 13. THE MESSAGE TO
PHILADELPHIA.*Expository Notes.*

7.—The title of the sixth letter does not, like that of the second, refer to the past; but it expands the mere statement of the writer's being alive into a vivid sketch of his present character and powers. *True*, in Greek, is a negative quality, originally meaning *unconcealed*; so that it requires several of our positive words to include its full meaning, unless we can be satisfied with *agreeable to truth*. It means *real, genuine, honest, and open*, and also *truthful, unerring*. *Saint*, or *holy*, which represent the same Greek word, seem to mean *acting under religious awe and consistency*, except that *awe* originally means *terror*—and there is none of that in *Saint*. He has the key (Isa. xxii. 22) of the supreme monarch; and, as his representative, can open or shut every door in the sacred city or palaces. As if he would say, that he will admit whomsoever he may think fit to be admitted, notwithstanding the man's precedents; and will exclude whomsoever he thinks unfit to be admitted, notwithstanding the man's professions. This is not the key of heaven, nor hell; but the key of admission to the church of Christ's saints, and to their privileges.

8.—This sixth letter describes the church to which it is addressed as being granted an open door, which seems clearly to mean an entrance into the church of the saints. It implies many and vigorous attempts to shut it, while the church had but small power—like a child, or like a man recently recovered from disease—either to hold the door open, or to walk through it. The word *power*, in the Greek means *bodily strength*; and in the metaphor here used the above seem to be the only objects requiring the exercise of any sort of *power*. It is implied that the

church exercised all the power it had ; and that it kept, and did its best to consider and follow, Christ's word ; and that it did not shrink from Christ, or deny Christ's name—His true existence and relations (as Exod. iii. 13-15) ; did not shrink from conduct that was in accordance with His spirit and instructions (1 Tim. vi. 1) ; nor from full and undisguised confidence in His presence and help (as 1 Sam. xvii. 45) ; nor from giving public instruction in His glad tidings of salvation to those out of, as well as in, the church, who do not refuse to hear (Matt. x. 14, 15).

It is a subject of great interest to us of the Anglo-Saxon races ; for surely the door, through which our children and our neighbours must be brought into Christ's church, was never more open since St. John's time than it is to-day. We have amongst us Christ's church divided, indeed, into an infinity of sects, schools of thought or phrase, and styles of manner and dress ; but all of them bound to study their Bibles, if only to justify the points of difference which exist amongst them, and therefore all of them more fully in the way of knowing the essential points on which all agree, than any village visited by two disciples (Matt. x. 14, 15). However that may be, the letter to this church must make every real Christian in Great Britain, North America, or Australasia, reflect as to whether the professing church of Christ in their country is keeping His word towards all the growing generation, young and old, lambs and sheep (John xxi. 15-17), who are, if any are, to be the future church of Christ. If they be not, the neglect may well cause grave anxiety ; and even if, under adverse circumstances, the efforts made anywhere by the elders in the church to keep the door open to the younger are feeble and ineffective, nevertheless Christ's promise will hold : no one will be able to shut the door, for it is *His* door.

9.—This church of Philadelphia had confessed Christ's name under strong temptations to the denial of it.

Further, Christ says that He is *granting* to certain of those false Christians who profess to be under the covenant, but are not—or, rather, He says that He will *cause* them to come and worship in front of the feet of this church; an expression that is nowhere else used, though elsewhere (xv. 4) the nations are described as all worshipping in front of Almighty God—evidently meaning that God is the object of their worship. Isaiah (lx. 14) seems to describe a similar worshipping, but merely uses the language of ordinary salaaming of the most reverential kind. Such we may understand to be meant here. Or it would be a natural explanation of the metaphor to say, that the false Christians are turned to God, and to His worship, by seeing the *walk* of this church, as it enters the city of David, the true Church.

10.—Then follows a new and remarkable promise, viz., that as they had kept—preserved and followed—the word, or tidings, of Christ's endurance, He also would keep the church out of persecution. It is the angel of the church to whom this is addressed, in the singular number, symbolizing not the individual members of the church, but the church as an organization. As we might say, that the Wesleyan Church holds such and such views or practices; and that the Baptist Church agrees or disagrees with them. The words are, that He will keep—will take care of, have an eye upon—the angel of the church in Philadelphia, out of the hour of, or time appointed for, the trial coming on the whole world. The word *trial* is that usually translated *temptation* in the Lord's prayer, and in the account of our Lord's *temptations* by the Devil (Matt. iv. 1, etc.), and, later on, in St. Peter (1 Pet. i. 6). It seems, therefore, that while Christ and His disciples were (Luke xxii. 28) subjected to trials, this church is to be spared such experiences.

This church will arrive at the time for the whole world—not the Roman world, or Christendom, whose symbol is

the *earth*, but the whole world in our sense—to be under trial; and will be themselves *kept out of it*—a realization of that for which we pray to God, ‘Lead us not into temptation.’ Christ teaches us to pray not to be led into trial; the only fulfilment of which prayer would be to keep us outside it, or out of it; *not*, as often assumed, to let us get in, and then lead us out. That some such safe and glorious position is in prospect, in which Christ will keep the Church in a spiritual safety exceeding all experience hitherto, is hinted in various places in the Old and New Testaments; and very clearly in St. Paul’s reflections on the pruned olive-tree (Rom. xi. 21).

11.—This magnificent and honourable condition of the church makes a caution necessary. Prosperity is morally dangerous; what the chief priests and Pharisees prided themselves upon being, as they trod the now ruined porches of Jerusalem, was altogether different from what they really were (Matt. xxi. 23, 31). Unless a church holds the word of Christ’s endurance, not in the letter only, nor as overlaid by human additions, like the Pharisees, it may, when its Lord arrives in royal majesty, lose its crown, even as they had done. More than the material crown which those Jews looked for is intended. The crown here spoken of is used merely as a symbol for a state happier, and more secure, than any material kingdom; its loss represents a loss just touched upon by our Lord in His lamentation over Jerusalem (Matt. xxiii. 37).

12.—As the letter seems to include particular blessing, and protection from trial, for this church upon earth, so the subscription promises to every conqueror to make him ‘a pillar in the temple of my God’—a phrase only used in reference to Christ’s spiritual temple on earth, and never of any visionary or future temple in this prophecy. There is nothing here said for or against the conqueror being made a pillar during his earthly life. If we conclude

that here, as in other subscriptions, the promise is to take full effect after the conqueror's death, it will hold from the time that death finds him a conqueror, and right through the millennium and first resurrection, until the old *temple* is swallowed up in the new Jerusalem (xxi. 22). We cannot expect to conceive the scene of action or worship, the happiness and glory, or the structure supported; but we are told that God's name will be permanently written upon him.

SECTION III. VERSES 14 TO 22. THE MESSAGE TO
LAODICAEA.

Expository Notes.

14.—The seventh church is described as one in which, owing to the neglect of Christ's call, Christianity is in a low and pitiable state. The title asserts Christ to be the *Amen*, apparently meaning the authorized teacher of the things of God. The word *amen* is associated with ratification, and with final determination of a purpose, or assent to an engagement, in 2 Cor. i. 20, and perhaps in the Hebrew of Isaiah lxv. 16. St. John in his Gospel has recorded Christ's use of the word *amen* (translated *verily* in the Authorized Version), once or twice repeated when he revealed Divine truths or purposes beyond the reach of human knowledge. His cry 'Amen, amen,' asserted both his own knowledge of what he was about to impart, and his truthfulness in imparting it. The exclamation informed his hearers that what followed was his formal testimony as a fully competent and trustworthy witness. Moreover, as the eleven apostles restricted their choice of a successor of Judas to men who had companied with them all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them (Acts i. 21), so the author of this letter asserts his wonderful qualification as a witness, viz., that he is *the beginning of God's creation*. The beginning we might suppose to be

the first step taken in it, the first work done in execution of it; but fortunately the first of the things St. John himself selected to record in his Gospel, is Christ's connection with the creation (John i. 1, 3, etc.). When St. John speaks of Christ's existence 'in the beginning,' he means that 'without Him there came about not one thing which has come about'; but he is not including Christ as one of the created things. We shall accordingly find hereafter that the Lamb in this vision is in a similar sense the beginning of all the dealings of God with earth, as these dealings are revealed by visions in this book of Revelation. To rouse an unwilling person from sleep to a perception of pressing danger, or to active precautions for securing his safety—and especially if the danger be out of sight—the essential point is, that the person who rouses should be known to the person who is to be roused as a trustworthy witness. Hence the appropriateness of this title to the church in Laodicea.

15.—The works of the Laodicean angel are such as to show the church to be neither cold nor hot. Care has to be taken in endeavouring to explain this metaphor. We need not suppose the Spirit to be using irony on such a subject. We observe that not only does the Spirit wish that the angel were cold or hot, but he gives as the reason for spueing him out of his mouth, that he is lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot; so we may safely infer that had the angel been either cold or hot, the Son of man would *not* spue him out. This may mean that the teaching, temper, and spirit of the professing church, that which held it together in one organization and community, had not exhibited the positive qualities which could be divided, or vanquished, or corrected, by the sword proceeding from the mouth of the Son of man; so, that metaphor failing, another metaphor indicating the total rejection and abhorrence of such an *angel*, is adopted.

Our Lord Himself (Matt. xxiv. 12) uses the expression

of love growing cold, or cool, presumably meaning the love He describes in His commandment (Mark xii. 30, 31)—love to God and to man. But in this letter the cold and heat are attached to the angel, and through him to the persons, with reference to their works, and not to motives. It would be difficult to consider *coldness* as meaning *aversion* to God or man, or to God's worship; or to suppose the church voluntarily *working*, and yet doing things from which it was averse; nor could the Spirit wish the Laodiceans so to act. We can take 'heat' to signify conscientious zeal, and coldness to signify conscientious inappreciation or blindness, and 'lukewarmness' to signify a well-informed indifference. In St. Paul's case, before his conversion, he had no love to Christ; and in that he was cold; nor any love to man inconsistent with imprisoning men, or stoning them (Acts xxvi. 10); perhaps in that he was cool. He was a zealous hater of the 'Way' (Acts ix. 2): the *works* he did, good or bad, he did zealously (e.g., Phil. iii. 6; Acts xxii. 3): in these he was hot, though he acted ignorantly and in unbelief (1 Tim. i. 13). God did not spue him out, but chose him as an Apostle. Hence we conclude that a lukewarm man encourages his conscience to be easy, and to slumber; and does what his conscience tells him he should do, in a careless, self-sufficient, or perhaps grudging, way; for instance, without earnest prayer to God; or from unwilling fear, not from love; or from an obstinate temper, without much love or fear; or, generally, in a slack presumptuous spirit. The lukewarmness is not the state of a man eagerly in search of a pearl, nor that of a careless wanderer over a field in which an unknown treasure is hidden; but it is that of a man who is apathetic and indifferent after having found the pearl, or the treasure. We know, even in our day, and especially where the subsistence of the clergy depends on the favour either of small or of great men, that the teaching and temper of the

church is apt to avoid subjects either hot or cold, and to degenerate into formulas that are easy, and soothing to careless presumption.

17.—Further illustrations of this quality of *lukewarmness* follow. The church of Laodicea is described, in the person of their angel, as not poor in spirit (Matt. v. 3), nor as having the kingdom of heaven. The reference is not, of course, to material wealth or comforts; it is to those who are satisfied with the promises, and the beautiful ideas of the Word and works of God. They see, and admire, and are content to stop there. They say "Lord, Lord," and do not what He says. They have an intellectual knowledge, and a mind to admire His promises, His incomparable teaching, and His exceeding love; they see the pearl and the treasure, and admire; but they feel no zeal—they avoid such zealous love as would arouse them from vain-glorious self-satisfaction. Perhaps they are anxious to have others share and uphold their confidence (1 Cor. i. 12, etc.), and so become hot professors of the virtues and faith which they fail to show by their works. They do not even know what it is they lack, so little have they felt a desire, or made an endeavour, to learn what love to God and man is, as defined in the Word and works of God. No doubt such persons are to be tenderly treated; they have to give up all their trusted wisdom and righteousness and sanctification for Christ, as St. Paul had done (1 Cor. i. 30, 31); and such a conversion is more astonishing than that of one ignorant or thoughtless. It is a great sacrifice to give up all our human conception of God and of His promises of religious faith and virtues, and to be content to perceive that He alone must be our guide. The Pharisees, for instance, were the least hopeful of the auditors of Jesus. In the first words of His first recorded public sermon, Christ Himself reiterates, in half a dozen different aspects, the blessedness and the reward of such a sacrifice; and in this letter He assures

the church that those whom He loves—and He surely loves those whom He has Himself blessed—may rely on Him. *He* will convince them, and will train or instruct them, as a teacher does a boy. So He did St. Paul; and there is no safer training; natural, and even unavoidable as it is, that every man's first security is in his own knowledge; that his first dawn of light shows him only his own conceptions.

20.—But Christ's appeal and promise go beyond the blessed, of whom He is fond, to include the world which He loves (John iii. 16). He stands at every man's door, and is knocking; and whosoever ventures to open will find a friend to share His hopes and motives, and even fears, and to make him in return a sharer of all His own wisdom, and righteousness, and glory.

21.—This promise is repeated in the subscription. The highest glory of its kind, for which Christ has been waiting (Psa. ii. ; xlv. 6, 7; cx. 1; etc.), is represented by His being seated on a throne at God's right hand, having all His enemies subdued under His feet. He here promises to everyone who conquers, in or out of the churches, honour exactly similar to that so represented as given to Himself by the Father. Language could not be clearer or stronger; it includes, as it were, a contract and a muster, or pattern; and it is such as the most enthusiastic religious fanatic would not invent; nor have Pope or priests ever been able to promise the highest celestial honours like this.

NOTE ON THE GROUP OF SEVEN MESSAGES.

These seven letters stand first in this revelation. The letters are not revealed as a separate vision, but form a preamble within the revelation which was given to St. John by vision on behalf of all the servants of Christ; and they are dictated to him upon earth, before he is, in

the same vision, summoned up to heaven. From heaven he sees several other groups, of seven scenes each, representing things which occur upon earth, and form the body of the said revelation. As has been pointed out in the vision shown to John on earth, Christ is the great actor; in that shown to John from heaven God the Father is the great actor, through His angels; and Christ is the most honoured character in the scenes, until the end when the Father places Christ Himself in possession of the kingdom and throne.

This arrangement reminds us of the ordinary composition of the Hebrew psalms. In them a short preamble states the main subject and purpose of the psalm; and the rest of the psalm repeats illustrations and arguments in support of the one or other, or else reflections flowing from them. Taking a few, almost at haphazard: Psa. xviii. 1-3 heads a hymn of gratitude and reliance; xix. 1 of the Creator's glory; xx. 1 is the burden of a blessing on a war-party which was about to start, of which the manner and character follow in more detail. Later, Psa. civ. 1, cv. 1-4, cvi. 1 are challenges of the musician to his hearers, stating the main burden of his song, and inviting them to notice how he supports or proves it. In a similar way this group of letters states the conditions and objects of God's dealings with mankind during this age, when the churches will be afflicted with trials both from without and from within, in order to develop their members by exercise and purification, to be fit for an eternity of reward as conquerors. Immediately after receiving these letters, St. John is ushered, in vision, into heaven, to be shown details and illustrations of God's dealings in successive groups of visions, each group extending, of course, over the whole time; the whole concluding with a picture of the reward which will follow to 'the conqueror.'

Perhaps Psalm cvii. is as complete an illustration of

this kind of arrangement as can be quoted. Of the verses, 1 gives the appeal in the heart of the writer; 2, 3 challenge the hearers to listen, to judge if the writer supports the ground of his appeal, and to obey it if the grounds be proved just. Then 4-9, 10-16, 17-22, 23-32 are four groups of illustration, each complete in itself: the first, from the history of the obedient under deprivation; the second, from the history of rebellion and return; the third, from the observation of presumptuous fools brought to God by sickness, and delivered; the fourth, from the experience of our impotency against the powers of nature, and of our security in the midst of them. Each has a little episode of application to the general appeal, and there follows at the last a long and varied illustration of the reasonableness, happiness, and security of those who obey the appeal; and a touching and persuasive postscript is added in the last verse. We shall find that St. John's revelation will bear a very similar arrangement; not followed as a canon, but resulting from the treatment of a subject which is in some respects similar, and can be treated in a similar spirit.

As in the preamble to the psalm, this group of letters is addressed to all hearers, and to all visible churches worshipping God on earth for the whole age; and these are symbolized by seven of the churches that were nearest to Ephesus, the city in which it is probable that St. John had exercised his apostleship for years. It is evident that a single letter, addressed to all the existing churches, could not have borne a comprehensive symbolic character; nor could it have been in full harmony with the construction of the rest of the book. To make the symbolic meaning clearer, the letters are nominally addressed, not to the churches direct, but to the seven angels of the seven churches. The angel, as symbolizing a church, is given somewhat as Daniel and St. John give a beast, or a dragon, to symbolize an empire, or a horn or a harlot to symbolize a blasphemous false church. It is noteworthy that while

the seven lampstands are (*i.e.*, represent) seven churches—not *the* seven churches, though the names of seven had just been mentioned with the voice like a trumpet—they are not attached to the places nor persons addressed in such a way that they may not be separated from them (ii. 5). The symbolic lampstand represents a privilege of united worship, and of community of enlightenment and grace before God, which may be taken away from any unworthy church.

It seems, then, needless, as it is usually needless in the Psalms, to attempt to ascertain whether there were in any of the cities named local circumstances to suggest the subject-matter of these letters. We may at once take them as prophetic descriptions of the circumstances and characters of churches that would be most notable during the era covered by the subsequent visions. All churches need such words of warning or encouragement addressed to them by their good and faithful Shepherd.

It is interesting to notice that our Lord Himself while on earth gave His apostles not only direct teaching by the help of which they might guide themselves, and all who through them would be led to seek Him, up to the time of His second coming, but also added to this a prophetic sketch (Matt. xxiv. 3-28) of the behaviour of the outside world, first up to the close of the Jewish ceremonial polity, and after that (*ibid.*, 29-31) amongst the Gentiles up to the time of His second coming. So, here, the revelation made by Christ through St. John includes a direct message to His churches, and a symbolic scroll of the future of the outside world so far as it would affect the churches; and this is given in sevenfold pictures. The latter, being the chief object of the revelation, is the more expanded; but the former, as the most important part of the subject, is given the first place. In each case we seem to have the same method: direct instruction to disciples, and a prophetic warning, sufficiently clear to

help and secure them, though not clear enough to guide them, like a chart, in the sea of political, and national, and social commotions.

The first church is described as painstaking, vigilant, and faithful to the orthodoxy of its profession. But, in spite of this, or perhaps in the distraction and care which troubles involve, the church has quitted its first and essential love. It is a church of the disposition of Martha, rather than of her sister Mary; and, like Martha, it will soon find itself left to serve alone. Christ will not be forced to serve amid such anxieties and troubles, but will withdraw and remove the lampstand from this church. Thomas Scott, in his commentary on the fourth verse, justifies the possibility of this as in accordance with our experience. 'There is some difficulty in conceiving how the persevering diligence and patience of this church could consist with that abatement in love with which it is charged. But observation and experience combine to prove, that in many instances, while the affections are lively and fervent, men engage zealously in services, and form habits of exertion, self-denial, patience, and courageous disregard to opposition and reproach, in which, as to outward conduct at least, they persevere, from various motives, and often conscientiously, though it is lamentably true, and they know it, that their hearts are not so thoroughly engaged in what they do, as they once were. Many are well aware that this is their case: they have zeal enough to retain them in their former course of active service, which is become habitual, and in some cases creditable; but had they not been more "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," in former days, these *habits* would never have been formed, those services would never have been engaged in.' Scott goes on to urge a more general warning: 'Perhaps most Christians are too apt to take encouragement from such diligence, and to silence the remonstrances of their consciences by it; but it is plain

that our Saviour and Judge considers this as a very criminal state of heart and conduct.'

As an instance of a state of the churches in England which comes very near to that of Ephesus, their condition in the reign of Queen Anne may be taken. So far as the condition of the church was then revealed in its ministry, its pamphleteers, and its political supporters, it is clear enough that, whichever of the sects was most nearly right, they were all most sadly wrong. But the danger of losing the *spirit* of church doctrine and ministry in mere vigilance for orthodoxy was a danger before St. John wrote (Rom. x. 2; 1 Cor. i. 10). The disastrous result of centuries of sectarian contest amongst the early churches, during which the Western churches were gradually formed into the existing Papal system, justifies the prominence that is given to this warning letter.

The second church is exposed to oppression, poverty, and slander from those who, while professing orthodoxy, are not really orthodox; to the danger of being forced from Christ, rather than, as with Ephesus, of being distracted away from the love of Him. Active persecution by the worldly power will follow. This evil has been in operation from St. John's time to the present; it may even be said from the foundation of the Christian church at Antioch (see Acts xv. 1, etc.).

The third church is exposed to debasing teachings. Non-professors, like Balaam, and professors, like Nicolas, will develop schemes to reconcile the Gospel with sin, to relieve Christians from the sense of sin, and to induce some to yield to the attractions of bodily self-indulgence. The 'Harlot,' in purple and scarlet (xvii. 1, 2), may remind us how the Papacy laid itself out to allure men from the higher, the spiritual, aims to the lower ones of power, ease, or luxury. And no other professing church has been altogether free from the same charge. Indeed, it requires a keen and deep-searching discrimination to

separate between Gospel virtue and Gospel laxity in an individual (*e.g.*, 1 Cor. xiii. 3), or in a church. It seems that this church, though it yielded to some phase of idolatry, and to fornication, yet refused to do homage to Satan, as representing pagan idols. Notwithstanding its subtle debasements, it was orthodox; it held Christ's name, and did not deny its faith in Him. We must not think that this applies only to the times of some early ambitious bishop, or crusader, or Christian Court, nor even only to tradesmen, farmers, and politicians of the present day. Everyone is exposed to the temptation of insincerity.

The description of the fourth church reminds us of Eli and David. It has both love and faith, and careful ministration and constancy; but while these grow it tolerates within it a teaching and a practice which are an open revolting against God, and a violation of the professed faith of the church. That such desertion of God's truth, such straying from His 'way,' such avowed acceptance of fanciful laws of right and wrong, of honour and crime, of morality and depravity, prevailed, both before and after the feudal times, history and legend bear witness. Many heartless villains of this type, and of both sexes, exist at the present day, debauched and debauching those whom they can ensnare or control, and carelessly ruining souls and bodies. This depravity, which human law cannot fully reach, nor its punishments stamp out, will not escape the Son of God, whose eyes are as a flame of fire.

Such as have been entangled in this adulterous set, but have not accepted their teaching, nor followed it out to the depths of Satan, will not be involved in the ruin that is surely coming upon them. Free escape is offered; Christ still offers them His burden, with no additions.

So far, the characteristics of the churches given are such as attend defence and attack—the rejection of

threats and allurements, and the exercise of love, confidence and patience in the rejection. The fifth church is a dead church. Like the Apostles in the garden of Gethsemane, they are failing to keep awake; they are not using the privileges—which they will in a few moments lose for ever—to confirm their own graces, nor to build up their neighbour's. Yet such as shall have faithfully kept themselves holy will, like those eleven Apostles, be rehabilitated; whatever they may have lost, they will not be left abject in heaven.

The innocence and sleepiness of this church suggest very useful thoughts. It is only one example of the condition of every church of the seven, and, indeed, of every Christian man—a condition, viz., of mixed evil and good. We note that the innocence does not excuse the sleepiness; the church will find itself *robbed* by Christ of all over which it failed to watch. Again, as the sleepiness gets its deserts, or, rather, loses all the treasure it failed to deserve, so the innocence gets all its deserts, or, as it may be better put, where there is perfect love, as between father and child, and no limit of the will to give, gets all Christ can give it, viz., everlasting innocence amongst His redeemed. We have seen how active, loyal church work and administration run the risk of losing love, or of exalting means into ends, or of justifying means by ends. Here we have the danger of seeking innocence to the deadening of all else. The anchorites, monks and nuns, considering the times in which they lived, had strong justification for deserting the ordinary duties of life. We may infer this from the comparatively settled era of our Henry I. He sought to marry Matilda, daughter of Malcolm III., King of Scotland, niece of Edgar the Atheling, or Saxon heir-presumptive of the English crown. She had taken the veil in the nunnery of Rumsey; but at a court held by Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, at Lambeth, Matilda pleaded that she had taken the veil,

not with a view to enter a religious life, but, by a custom familiar to English ladies, to protect her chastity from the brutal violence of the Normans. The council of prelates and nobles, sensible that even a princess had otherwise no security for her honour, admitted the reason as valid, and pronounced Matilda free to marry, and married she accordingly was (Hume, ed. 1830, vol. i., p. 273). Subsequently celibacy was enforced on the priesthood; later on, the Protestants flogged people into church; Puritans abstained from all recreation; and, still later, abstinence from wine, theatres, imaginative literature, and some of the narcotics, have been preached. Both the Old and the New Testaments encourage self-control, with occasional abstinence. But mere abstinence, when carried beyond the guidance of the Christian graces and the Christian self-control, has deprived of spiritual wealth and jewels the eternal life of many.

The danger of this inactive innocence is, that the mortification of active desires may extend (except in the case of the few, verse 4) to the extinction of innocence itself, and may involve total loss. This is of such importance that it occupies the whole letter, which stands at the head of the three letters of warning against mischiefs that are not provoked by the teaching of opponents to the pure Word of God. The other two deal with openings to activity, and encouragement to it. This sort of quasi-innocent slumbering of the professing churches seems to have grown more prevalent in the middle and in recent centuries, and to have endangered churches when they were relieved from persecution and disabilities. It may have been fostered by theories of predestination and election, or of political economy, and other things. This sleep does *not* mean neglect of the letter and form of active administrative duties; it seems rather to refer to the dying out of the Christian motive, temper, and faithfulness. In order to have eternal treasure, the

physical activities of the family, of neighbour, church-member, citizen, and subject, must be practised in communion with Christ.

The sixth church is described as having a door opened before it; doubtless not *opened* by human agency, as it cannot be *closed* by human power. It would seem that a great number of those who have worshipped Satan will come and honour this church. We have elsewhere Satan symbolized as an earthly dragon (xii. 3), and elsewhere as giving his authority to earthly beasts or powers (xiii. 2, 12) to worship—and this was, virtually, to worship him. Here we have a synagogue of Satan's. This may perhaps mean pagan idolaters outside Christendom; but it seems rather to be confined to schools of teaching and practice, as in ii. 9, which, though nominally within the covenant, have given up all faith in God, and all Christian practices. These will come and worship before this church, presumably accepting its guidance, and will learn to know that it is a church loved by Christ. No doubt this 'church' is already active in Christendom, and entrusted with these fruits of its action. To this church, placed in so forward and influential a station, a promise is given of a dignity and reward more glorious than any earthly emperor could give his most favoured legion. They, of whom this church is the symbol, are assured, not of pre-eminence in danger and death, but of absolute preservation, by the power of God, from the trial that is about to come upon the whole world. So far as we can judge from history, cases of this pre-eminence have been granted to Christian churches from early times, notably by the successive conversion to Christianity of Gothic tribes and chiefs; but the church has always failed in so grand a position to observe the caution added after the promise in this letter: 'Hold what thou hast, that no one take thy crown.' In the earlier ages the Bishops strove to usurp the place and worship due to God, and to

claim the rights of earthly rulers. Later on they prostituted that claim for worldly power, showing more skill in the clever appropriation of heathen festivals, and religious beliefs, and even gods, to embellish so-called Christian festivals and services, than in holding what the church held from Christ and His Apostles. Hence the complete fulfilment of this description of a church is deferred to the latter days. That it will come (as it may come) is still a worthy subject for prayer and hope; and it never will come until a church exists which fulfils the condition. The promise can never be won by presumptuous pleadings, by a church seeking it in the spirit of the Jews who defended Jerusalem against the army of Titus.

We have now arrived at the seventh letter, and find its form, and the description which it contains of the church, similar to the others. This is agreeable to the interpretation that the seven churches, like the seven spirits of God, etc., are not successive, but represent every church worshipping and acknowledging Christ, and having the light of His candlestick, throughout the whole age. Were they symbols of successive eras of the churches, the seventh, when reached, might perhaps be left nearly blank, like the seventh day of creation, or the seventh seal; or it might contain indications of the breaking up of existing conditions and the approach of new, like the seventh trumpet, or seventh plague. As it is, the seventh letter is but little distinguished from the others.

Still, there are several indications that the seventh letter deals with a condition which, though never absent from the churches, will be especially prevalent during the latter days of their era. If we consider the words in which the coming of our Lord is foretold by Himself, we find (Matt. xxiv. 30) that after the overthrow and downfall of all the ruling and guiding powers of earth, the sign or signal of the Son of man will appear in heaven; and then all the tribes of the earth will see Him coming in the clouds of (the terrestrial) heaven, with

power and great glory. That indicates a specially obvious appearance—one that all, believers or unbelievers, will see. But (Matt. xxvi. 64) our Lord said to the High Priest and council, that from that moment, from the very time of His condemnation and crucifixion, they would see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven, much as he had, a few hours before (John xiii. 31, 32), described Himself as already glorified by the betrayal which was on foot, and had affirmed that God would straightway glorify Him. From all which we gather that, for practical help to His servants, Christ has, since His ascension, been at God's right hand, and can now be seen by His servants coming in the clouds of heaven. We must remember how in the East—the region of droughts and periodical rains—the clouds hold a position as blessings to man, and as the creators of everything that is necessary to feed him and the whole animal world, which is more important even than that of the sun, or moon, or stars; and the clouds are much more eagerly discussed, prayed for, and looked for. This symbol of Christ's sitting (a figure too often repeated in Scripture to be meaningless), visible only to His servants and to believers, is dropped in describing His appearance, also in clouds of heaven, but visible to all inhabitants of the earth, after the complete breaking up and subjugation of earthly kingdoms of the old type. It seems as if the letter to Laodicea brings us up to, or close to, this time of Christ's more manifest and glorious appearing, after the kingdoms of the earth shall have been subdued for Him, and given to Him, by the Father. The attestation in the title—the *Amen*, under Christ's own hand as witness (iii. 14)—is in harmony with this; and the latter half of the letter seems to be dictated as though the brilliant clouds of the new era (Matt. xxiv. 30) were already gathering before men's eyes. That, no doubt, is the case now; and to each of us the warning and promises of this letter are of personal interest, whatever

final fulfilment may occur ten, a hundred, or a thousand years hence.

The figure used in describing the state of the seventh church is new, as if it were adapted to some new development of spiritual disease. We are accustomed to the figures of stiffneckedness, blindness, deafness, sleep, and death. Here we have a new figure—that of lukewarmness; one which gives to *cold* and *hot* equal mention as healthy states, and in accordance with Christ's will, but makes 'lukewarmness' abominable. The figure seems to be drawn from drinkable liquids. A cup of cold water is proverbially grateful to a thirsty traveller. Something hot is as grateful to one suffering from cold, want of food, or illness. Between these two is to be found a lukewarm temperature which none desire, and which the stomach is likely enough to reject. This figure, after being once used, is not alluded to in the remainder of the letter. It seems to represent such a conviction of a creator as should lead a man to seek after Him (Acts xvii. 27); such a longing for redemption as should lead a man to seek escape from sin, and reconciliation with God, coupled with an absence of trust, faith, fear, or affection, of proving, or even caring, what suggestions are right, and what wrong, and so drifting as if God's mercies and honour were scarcely worth a thought. The rest of the letter seems to refer to an easy laxity, like that described by our Lord (Matt. xxv. 3) as affecting the five foolish virgins, while they were actually waiting, and expecting, the immediate approach of the bridegroom. Lukewarmness in the church may mean that temper which cares neither to shut out what is bad, nor to develop what is good; the hospitality of such a church is practised in a spirit of self-indulgence and ease, without selection of guests, or care for their most beneficial entertainment: the works resulting from such a temper would be lukewarm, and more distasteful than those of a niggard or fanatic could be, if done with real discrimination and with self-denial.

CHAPTER IV.

ORIGINAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

1 AFTER these things I saw : and, behold, a door
(standing) open in the heaven ; and the first voice,
2 saying, ‘ Ascend hither, and I will show thee what
things must occur after these.’ Immediately I came
to be in spirit : and, behold, a throne lay in heaven ;
3 and upon the throne (a person) seated ; and he who
was seated like in appearance jasper stone, and
cornelian ; and a bow round about the throne like
4 in appearance emerald ; and round about the throne
twenty-four thrones ; and (I saw) upon the twenty-
four thrones elders seated clothed in bright garments ;
5 and upon their heads gold crowns—and lightnings,
and voices, and thunders are coming out of the
throne ; and (behold) seven lamps of fire burning in
front of the throne, which are the seven spirits of
6 God ; and in front of the throne as if a sea, glassy
like crystal ; and between (me and) the throne, and
in the circle of the throne, four animals, full of eyes
7 before and behind. And the first animal like a lion,
and the second animal like a steer, and the third animal
8 having the face as if of a man, and the fourth animal
like a flying eagle ; and the four animals, having six
wings apiece, round about and within are full of eyes,
and have no stop, day and night, saying, ‘ Holy, holy,

9 holy, Lord God Almighty, the was, the being, and
 the coming !' And whenever the animals shall give
 glory, and honour, and thanks to him who is seated
 10 on the throne, who lives for the ages of ages, the
 twenty-four elders will fall in front of him who is
 seated on the throne, and will make salaam to him
 11 who lives for the ages of ages, and will throw their
 crowns in front of the throne, saying 'Thou art
 worthy, our Lord and God, to have received the
 glory, honour and power; for thou createdst all
 things, and on account of thy will they are, and were
 created.'

VERSES I TO II. THE VISION OF THE HEAVENLY
THRONE.

Exegetical and Critical Notes.

1. A DOOR. This word is used, in Greek, for the door of a house; and the entrance to a palace would be through a folding pair of doors of this kind. It does *not* apply to the door, or gate, of a city.

AFTER THESE (THINGS). Seems to be used by St. John as the exact equivalent of our old word *thereafter*, of any sequence of order or time.

ASCEND. Might apply to a few steps, as before a house door; or to an external flight of stairs, as if a voice from an upper floor called St. John to ascend.

2. LAY: ready *laid out* for a court, or durbar; usually a chair, on an extended carpet, pavement, daïs, or platform.

3. BOW: as if a *rainbow* or *halo*, apparently always a vertical one.

We should here notice the grammar that is peculiar to St. John throughout this book. Take the first verse: St. John saw: and behold, two things—a door, and a voice (or sound), which (voice) 'I heard as if of a trumpet' (a

trumpet) 'saying,' 'talking with me.' Here the sentence ends; the subject is carried on as if St. John's amanuensis, or writer, indicated that he had written so far; and as if St. John were so intent on the scene that he does not exactly remember how he had dictated the last clause. *Saying* is a participle agreeing not with *door*, *voice*, or *trumpet*, but with *Son of man*, the owner of the voice, who happens not to have been mentioned. In the second verse the exclamation *behold* applies to *the throne* set; to (a person) sitting on it; to (the person) sitting having the appearance described, and to the twenty-four thrones. The next clause breaks the sequence; the twenty-four elders, and gold crowns, are in the accusative case, as if, in dictating, St. John for the moment thought he had not said *behold*, but his usual *I saw*. Then he gets right again; the lightnings, etc., are in the nominative, after *behold*. Such deviations from classic grammar are frequent throughout the book. The above conjecture about the dictating is given simply to make the facts clear, not as an explanation carrying any authority. There is reason to think that St. John so earnestly avoided the use of the verb substantive (except in the sense *represent*), as to risk some confusing of the reader.

3, 4, 8.—ROUND ABOUT. The Greek word is an adverb, and seems to mean *in a circle outside*. In the sixth verse we have the noun 'in the *circle*, or ring, of the throne.' Arrows aimed at a warrior, and said to arrive *in the circle* of his shield, would be understood to hit his shield; but if said to pass, as here translated *round about*, they would be understood to miss the shield, but not by a great distance.

5.—WHICH ARE. This is a case (referred to at the end of note on verse 3) of St. John's using the verb substantive to mean *represent*: the lamps *represent*, or *are* (*the symbols of*) the spirits of God.

6.—LIKE CRYSTAL, or *ice*: not coloured, nor opaque.

BETWEEN ME AND THE THRONE: literally, *in the middle*

of the throne. The usual sense of *in the middle* in Greek was the same as ours; we may adopt that sense, if we take *throne* to include all that would be included in our word *court*. This seems scarcely justified either by our own idiom—for we never call a judge's *court* his *throne*—or by the Greek. We do not find the *temple* in the New Testament used to include its courts or buildings. It is obvious, therefore, that another ordinary sense must be taken, *between* or *betwixt*.

IN THE CIRCLE OF THE THRONE. Apparently within the ring, *i.e.*, the area within it. It may be conjectured, from the analogy of an open-air court, and from this description, that the chief throne stood centrally under the glow of a green overhead rainbow, and stood also at the middle point of a similarly shaped invisible bow or curve, in which the twenty-four thrones, twelve on each side, were set. Within the area defined by this last bow, or curve, were the animals.

8.—THE FOUR ANIMALS. The verb treats these as masculine, although their name, *animals*, is, in Greek, neuter. They do not, therefore, represent mere animals, much less mere matter.

ANIMALS. The Greek word, and the English, which is derived from the Latin, both mean *things* or *beings with life*, and all are usually applied to real animals, though here to symbolical figures.

9.—HONOUR: originally *worth*; hence marks of worth or posts of worth.

GLORY: originally *opinion*; hence *credit*, *glory*.

10. SALAAM. There is no English word for the Greek word that is used here, which applies, like the Eastern word *salaam*, to any act of greeting or reverence to a person or image, from kissing the hand to falling prostrate and tendering the sword. The word *worship* is obsolete in this sense, except where used in the marriage service at the putting on of the ring.

AGES OF AGES. So far as it admits of definition, the *age* now current includes, in this book, all the time occupied by the salvation of man, from the time of the first man included in the scheme, to the end of Christ's reign upon the earth as it now exists. The Greek word for *age* means a lifetime, or generation; but it was used by the philosophic writers of St. John's time for any age or dispensation. The Latin word Anglicized into *eternity* has a derivation of a more general meaning—a long time; for instance, it could be used, in the phrase 'everlasting eternity (Cicero), to mean vaguely, without mathematical precision, what we now affect to mean by *eternity*—viz., without beginning, pause, or end.'

CROWNS: of victory, honour, and privilege, rather than of official position, but apparently meant to include all. Such heavy State crowns as we are accustomed to picture would be carried during any ceremony by someone else, not worn by the person to whom they belonged. The triumphal *crowns* were merely natural leaves and twigs. The golden *crowns* given, as medals often are in our day, for individual prowess to soldiers or sailors of all ranks, would probably be as light as any ornamental fillets worn by ladies—a gold band round the head, having beaten gold ornaments riveted to it at intervals so as to stand up from the band all round. The band itself might be so slight as to be concealed by the hair. See the crown implying a deified hero worn by the Triumvir M. Antonius as shown on his medal. No crowns but of leaves are to be seen on the emperors' heads on the coins of St. John's time—for instance, in those illustrated in Conybeare and Howson's 'Life of St. Paul'—any more than on our own Queen's in her earlier days.

II.—CREATED: including forming, evolving, developing, and all other scientific conceptions, so far as they are correct, in addition to the original meaning, 'causing to be.'

Expository Notes.

1.—This voice like a trumpet seems to have come from heaven, judging from its call to ascend or mount up ‘hither.’ The figure like the Son of man was on earth, for St. John (i. 17) fell at his feet. The voice like a trumpet was the voice of God, and perhaps it is well to speculate no further. The same voice at the first (i. 11) had ordered St. John to write what he saw, and to send it to the seven churches, an order repeated by the figure like the Son of man, who dictated seven letters to the seven churches (ii. 1, etc.) in the name of the Spirit (ii. 7, and elsewhere). In such a matter, as in the case of the somewhat similar voice on Sinai (Ex. xix. 16, 19), we know only what we are told, and cannot learn more.

2.—This change of scene in the vision seems a suitable place for noting the three or four classes of vision shown to St. John. The first resembles the visions of Ezekiel or Daniel, in which the prophet seems, in spirit, to be on earth, and to see a vision of things taking place on, or above, the earth. In this way St. John sees the Son of man amidst the seven lampstands, and receives the letters to be addressed to the churches. There is a fresh character in the next stage of his vision: the prophet seems to be in heaven. He has advanced a stage into dreamland, and the vast imagery—the throne of God, surrounded by those of the elders, and with space for millions of angels (v. 11)—seems to be constantly at hand, and often present to his consciousness, while the prophet is thence shown visions of a third sort, viz., visions which he dreams that he is shown when in heaven. The Lamb may be seen by the prophet to be present in heaven, in the act of breaking the sixth seal, holding the scroll of which, he will next break the seventh seal (vi. 12; vii. 1), while St. John is seeing out of heaven a vision of the earth, with an angel at each corner, and hears that there

are in that earth one hundred and forty-four thousands sealed. At another time the prophet, still in heaven, sees the same Lamb standing with the same one hundred and forty-four thousands on Mount Zion (xiv. 1), while he continues to hear the sounds, and to watch the living creatures and elders, where he seems to himself to be (xiv. 2, 3) in heaven, and he is aware (xiv. 3) that the one hundred and forty-four thousands on earth are hearing the same sounds which he is hearing in heaven. Again, as in the case of the Old Testament prophets figures of the vision would approach, touch, or address the prophet, so it is here, figures, both of the heaven (v. 5) and of the visions seen from heaven (xvii. 1), seem to come and speak to the prophet, and he sees communications between heaven and these visions; nay, the prophet himself seems to himself to go off from heaven, and to be himself present on the scene of his vision in a wilderness on earth (xvii. 3). All this is fully consistent with the nature of dreams, and with the natural language of a man when describing his dreams; but it is very useful as impressing upon his readers the fact, that *all* things he sees are signs, all are visions, and nothing is to be treated as reality.

St. John, then, in the course of his dream, knows that he is in heaven, in the presence of an open-air court, or durbar. Such courts St. John must have often seen, and often read of (*e.g.*, John xviii. 29). They might be civic—in a forum, or gate, or on a pavement—or military, diplomatic, or judicial, such as were held by Alexander the Great for rewarding his adherents, or for parading his prisoners and selecting them for release, for slavery, or for crucifixion. They might be for a special council, or for the ordinary appearance of the commanding ruler in a state. A court, as usually seen, would imply a reserved space, such as a square of gravel, or grass, or pavement, perhaps raised, perhaps in a hollow visible from all around, or, if more space were needed, on a parade ground. The

court seemed to St. John to be sitting; in the chief central throne was God Himself. Over the throne was a bow, like a rainbow, only of pure green, forming a vertical arc of a circle. Twenty-four thrones were placed, for the most prominent members of the council, in the circumference of a circle having its centre at, or in front of, the throne, not necessarily equidistant from each other, nor forming a whole circle. It is out of the question that at a durbar the officers of state should sit round the president, like the hours on a clock-face, nor is this consistent with the description of the visionary appearance; for the thrones are not said to come between St. John and the central throne, as he says the animals did.

In front of the central throne were seven lamps. No lampstand is mentioned, as in *Zech. iv. 2, 10*; and perhaps these seven lamps, like those in *Zechariah*, whether themselves fixed or not, run like God's eyes over everything, and represent not only God's seeing everywhere, but His action, and the display of all His attributes wherever He sees. This ubiquity of God's Spirit is further represented by the lightnings, voices, and thunders which come directly from His throne, and represent that His light gives light, His voices instruction, and His thunders threatening everywhere. In front of the throne was a crystal sea. Solomon (*LXX., 2 Chron. iv. 2*) made a cast-metal 'sea' (the same word) fifteen feet in diameter, and set it on the southern side of the house. It was for washing in, for purification. As it would naturally contain clear water, the glassy, crystal-like appearance necessarily applies to the sea, *i.e.*, to the structure; otherwise it seems superfluous. It seems to represent a bath which completely purifies. *Fire* (*xiv. 10, 11*) represents purification of a destructive kind, and the lake of fire (*xix. 20*) a total earthly destruction (of the beast and the harlot).

6.—Besides these permanent officers of state, to recur to the symbol of a council or durbar, there were stationed

in their proper places, in front of the throne, in the centre of the council, four living and moving officials of the court, symbolized as animals with wings, full of eyes (like a tree of fruit). Great prominence is given to these animals; they lead the ceremonial adoration and obeisance. They are in complete harmony in the service and glory of God, and are quite beyond any influence of, or control by, any evil power. They represent Nature; the invincible forces, the constructive beneficence, the intelligence, and the universal reach of the laws of Nature are indicated by their several forms. Their number, that of the four cardinal points of the compass, symbolically includes all directions about, or, as St. John says, round about, the throne.

The number four, the number of sides of an enclosed square, is used to indicate the complete surrounding of a place on the plane of the earth, or of a country. Thus the four points of the compass may be used to mean things going out or coming in on every side; or the four winds to indicate the scattering to, or collection from, every side. Here the number four indicates that the natural laws and forces operate universally on earth in all directions. To us, in the body, all approach to God, or knowledge of Him, seems to be through His physical creation, except that which the Son reveals directly to each of us; but even that spiritual knowledge is only promised to those who wish to do God's will (John vii. 17); and our *doing* seems necessarily to involve our physical life. While the four animals thus surround the throne, we are struck with their each having six wings—the number of sides to a cube—as if to denote that their rapid movement extends through space—north, south, east, west, above and below.

Though these animals are stationed so close around the throne of God, and there give voice themselves, and lead others, in setting forth the praise of the attributes of God, they are never used as messengers. As representing

the living agents of the fixed laws of the universe, they abide in their fixed place, constantly declaring God's everlasting holiness, power and duration.

The elders remain fixed. If they represent the living agents of the fixed laws of mind, such as intelligence, memory, consciousness, and the affections, love, hope, regret, and so forth, *we* know of no power of expression which they can have apart from the laws of the material universe. Our Lord's teaching is that intellectual life is of much more value in God's eyes than physical life (Matt. vi. 25, 26); and if our attention to God's nearness to us in the physical life around us is befitting, it is much more befitting that we should observe His constant nearness to our intellectual life. But the elders seem to represent more than the agents of intellectual life; their bright clothing and their crowns symbolize spiritual action. Though they seem to have no agency in the direct redemption of fallen men, but ascribe that entirely to the Lamb (v. 9), they may well represent the living agents of the fixed and righteous laws of spirit, and those on earth who are reconciled to those laws.

The animals having eyes, as if permeating their inner being, may represent the knowledge, calculation, and energy with which every part of the universe is incessantly moved in praise of the Creator. The representatives of Christ's accepted people on earth, past and present, are wholly dependent on the animals for the occasion of their obeisances. There appear no others, no heavenly host, led on by the animals to praise God for His *creation* of the universe, and to lay their crowns at His feet as owing their existence to that creation. Yet the heavenly host outside the court (v. 11) join in the praise of God and of the Lamb for the scheme of *salvation*. All the glory and homage given in this vision dates from the creation of the first man, or, as regards the angels, from the first making known of this scheme of salvation to them. We

may infer that the order of nature, which has been carried on in all its minutiae millions of years without a man to appreciate it, was so carried on as a pleasure both to God and to His angels. In agreement with this, we never find in Scripture any denunciation of innocent pleasure received from the contemplation or enjoyment of physical things. On the contrary, all such pleasures are advocated by precept or example, and they frequently supplied our Lord Himself with parallels to the heaven He had left, and to the kingdom He was founding.

Recurring to the description of the *durbar*, we shall find that there was, as was usual in St. John's time, a shrine close by, with an altar.

As to the twenty-four elders, if we use the term *order of nature* for the executive acts of God's power in physical and intellectual things, as represented by the *animals*, we may use the term *order of spirit* for the executive acts of God's power in spiritual life, as represented by the *elders*. Their number may be the sum of the number of the sons of Jacob, and that of the Apostles who were originally appointed by our Lord. These are treated as the heads, or founders, of the servants of God upon earth under the two covenants, and they represent God's accepted servants on earth during all time, both under those covenants and outside them, whether patriarchs before the covenants, or those gathered from all nations—all, in fact, to whom God had given, or would give, His 'saving health' (Psa. lxxvii. 2).

8.—The leading off of praise to God by the four animals is beautifully paralleled in the nineteenth psalm, in which the ascription of glory to God, as revealed in Nature, leads to an ascription of glory to God as revealed in His Word. Yet no poet or prophet of the Old Testament ever saw the unity of God's law, in Nature or in His Word, as our Saviour saw it, and affirmed it in His parables and teachings.

Throughout the continuation of the vision we must suppose persons and things to appear and disappear, like the angels, or men in shining lustre, who were seen in our Lord's tomb, or like our Lord Himself after His resurrection. From the accounts preserved it would appear that some of the women saw one (Mark xvi. 5) angel, some saw two (Luke xxiv. 4) in the tomb; and our Lord could be seen, and conversed with, in a form which His most intimate friends did not recognise, and could then suddenly become fully recognised. Physical inconsistencies, too, are frequent in these visions. We may so call a lamb taking a scroll, voices uttered by animals, or by inanimate objects, and other things of this kind. This is obvious enough when great convulsions are being described—such as heaven being rolled up like a scroll; but we need to be on our guard in visions not indicating extraordinary disturbance, lest we limit our interpretation by conditions which do not really hold. And we need also to remember that *all* the things seen in the visions are theoglyphs—more analogous to the thing represented than an Egyptian hieroglyph, but not at all more artistic portraits or pictures of what they represent.

We are first introduced (chap. iv.) to a vision of the action in heaven, the abode of God. The animals never stop, day or night, in the song of praise by which they set forth the holiness and truth, or the faithful continuance, of God. The only thing which a scientific man, as such, can see is the order of Nature. The Creator who is carrying on this order must be conceived by him as extending backwards and forwards the same order of Nature indefinitely. There is no possibility of the order of Nature occurring by chance; none of its being invented and carried on by self-calculating and self-moving points or atoms. The only safe position an atheist can take up is, that he made himself, and all the universe with which he is acquainted. The first element of knowledge of God

is the belief that He made us, and not we ourselves; the doctrine of the Bible (see Rom. i. 20) is that to deny this is inexcusable, and that to openly acknowledge it is the first element of our praise of God (Psa. c. 3). It is therefore quite appropriate that, in this vision of the heavenly things, the animals, as emblems of God the Creator, should lead the praise. The elders follow, laying their crowns—emblems of all the graces, powers and relations which they have experienced since their creation—down before the throne, in acknowledgment that it is to God alone they owe them. After they have done this, they follow the lead given by the animals, and utter praise of God as their spiritual Creator. It is the order of thought suggested to the Psalmist by a consideration of man's position on earth (Psa. viii. 3-9).

CHAPTER V.

ORIGINAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

1 AND I saw upon the right hand of him who was
seated on the throne a scroll, written inside and on
2 the back, sealed up with seven seals: and I saw a
strong angel proclaiming in a loud voice, 'Who is
worthy to open the scroll, and to loose its seals?'
3 And no one was able, in heaven, or on earth, or under
4 the earth, to open the scroll, or to look at it. And I
was lamenting much that no one was found worthy
5 to open the scroll, or to look at it. And one out of
the elders says to me, 'Do not lament: see! the
Lion out of the tribe of Judah, the root of David,
conquered to open the scroll, and its seven seals.'
6 And I saw between the throne and the four animals,
and between the elders, a lamb standing, as if slain,
having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the
7 seven spirits of God sent away into all the earth: and
he came, and has received out of the right hand of
8 him seated on the throne—and when he received the
scroll, the four animals and the twenty-four elders fell
in front of the lamb, having each a harp, and gold
saucers full of incense, which are the prayers of the
9 Saints; and they sing, saying, 'Thou art worthy to
receive the scroll, and to open its seals, because thou
wast slain, and boughtest for God with thy blood out
10 of every tribe and language and people and nation,

and madest them a kingdom and priests : and they reign on the earth.'

- 11 And I saw and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and animals, and elders ; and their number was ten thousands of ten thousands,
12 and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, 'The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and
13 honour, and glory, and blessing.' And I heard every created thing which is in heaven, and on earth, and below the earth, and on the sea, and all things in them, saying 'Blessing, honour, glory, and force is his who is seated on the throne, and the Lamb's, for the
14 ages of ages': and the four animals said 'Amen'; and the elders fell and salaamed.

THE MYSTERY OF THE SEALED SCROLL.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

1.—SCROLL. The Greek word is a diminutive form of *roll*, or book, and means a *paper*, or *letter*. St. John's partiality for diminutive forms (*e.g.*, v. 6) would not alone account for his using one here, since he uses the full form of *roll*, or *book*, for the *book of life* (xx. 15).

2.—A STRONG ANGEL here proclaims with a voice loud enough to be heard through the whole earth and air. In x. 11, another carrying a small scroll cries out with a voice like a lion. In xviii. 21 another takes up a great millstone. There is no obvious meaning in the epithet *strong* more than that St. John, by what the angel in each case did, was impressed with the extraordinary strength of the angel.

6.—A LAMB. The Greek word means *lambkin*, and, except in this book, it only occurs in the New Testament in St. John's Gospel (xxi. 15)—'Feed My lambs.' In the LXX.

Exodus xii. 3, the paschal lamb is called (verse 3) by the general name for small cattle—sheep or goats of any age—as it is also in the first half of verse 5; but in the latter half of the verse it is ordered to be a male a year old from the lambs or kids. No doubt the lamb, as an emblem of Christ, is the paschal lamb, and the reason why St. John uses the word ‘lambkin’ is not clear. It is quite possible that it was the customary term used in Ephesus for the paschal lamb in St. John’s day.

7.—WHICH: the eyes, and, as likely as not, so far as grammar goes, the horns also.

This verse ends without saying what the Lamb appeared in the vision to have received, but the continuation of the narrative in verse 8 makes it clear that it was the scroll.

8.—HAVING EACH A HARP, etc. This is in construction ambiguous, and might mean each of the animals as well as each of the elders. It seems more in harmony with Hebrew symbolism to understand that the elders only suddenly appeared, in the vision, each possessed of a harp and a sacrificial saucer of incense, and that *all* joined in the song. It is in harmony with Old Testament metaphor to represent the hills skipping, floods clapping hands, corn laughing and singing. The saucers seem to mean the ordinary small shallow bowls, or plates, in which the priests took up a portion of an offering to wave it, burn it, or pour it out on the ground, as an official sanctification or acceptance of the whole.

Expository Notes.

1.—St. John now observed a scroll put upon, or into, the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. This scroll may contain the promise, or judicial certificate, of the blessing designed for man in the future ages, as the seals symbolize his curse in the present age. Its contents are never revealed; but the dealing with men up to, and

on the great day of judgment is revealed in several series of visions—seals, trumpets, etc.

The fifth chapter opens with the first of several series of visions, comprising the series of the seals, of the trumpets, and of the saucers ; each series is in the charge of, or is controlled by, heavenly beings. In this case of the seals proclamation is made throughout heaven, earth, and under the earth, for one able to open them ; and only one is found, viz., a lamb, who is unmistakably a symbol of Christ, as he affects the material world (John i. 3). The seven horns and eyes symbolize a power, knowledge, and action, as complete as God's in its perfection and extent. The lamb appears in the place of equality with Him who is on the throne, standing without obeisance within the inner circle of the officials of the court. He is 'as if slain,' a term equally applicable before, or after, His actual crucifixion. The proclamation of the strong angel was for someone to open the scroll, and loose its seals ; but when the lamb appears, the whole scroll is given to him ; He who is on the throne gives up the charge of it, and delivers it entirely to the lamb. St. Matthew agrees with St. John (Matt. xviii. 18) and others in recording, as did David in foreshadowing (Psa. ii. 8 ; viii. 6, etc.), this complete trust by God of all authority and glory into His Son's hands.

8.—This commission is at once cordially accepted, and ratified, by the representatives of the powers of nature and of spirit ; and in doing so they bring as their offering, not their crowns, but incense representing the prayers of the holy on earth. They have no offering to make more grateful or honourable than that which each of us can offer to Him who has done so much for us. It impresses on us that our present condition, compared with that of prehistoric man, justifies not only our wonder, but our gratitude ; not only our complacency, but our trust ; not dread, but prayer—that is on our part ; and on God's

part, that there is nothing which our Preserver and Saviour esteems more gratifying and honourable before heaven than the receipt of prayers and praises for preservation, and support as we are, and for salvation, to what He has offered us in our future.

11.—It would seem that the hosts of heaven are not confined to expressing their assent and joy through their works; or, as it were, by their happy subservience to the carrying out of the physical and spiritual processes of the present *age*. The cry of sevenfold honour doubtless indicates that a full appreciation of Christ's dealings with us, and of the marvellous possibilities opened to us, gives a direct pleasure to uncountable beings, represented by these angels round the court.

Round about. We do not know on what kind of *ground* these heavenly objects seemed to stand. It might have been a plain; it might be more in resemblance of the open ground outside a gate of Jerusalem, or of a forum like that in which St. Paul spoke at Athens, or any level spot with rising sides for the audience; or it might be all cloudland. Whatever it were, we must picture this heavenly host, not in a sphere all round the central court, but in a ring extending indefinitely around it; and we may suppose the appearance somewhat as if all stood on ground sloping down towards the court. It is not to be supposed that angels appeared to St. John with wings. Wings attached to deities in the Greek classic art were very rare, and were mere symbolic appendages to their caps, shoes, etc., and the wings adopted long after St. John's time are out of the question, being violations of every code of symbolism, art, or mechanics. No angel in the Bible is described as having wings; those sufficiently described had none. By St. John a few angels are described as *flying*, the term in ordinary use for a dart, arrow, stone, or bird during its flight; but that is necessary to describe the mode of its movement, as it seemed in the vision to pass across the heaven.

Ten thousands, etc. St. John's, as it were, hopeless attempt to give, by means of ordinary numerals, an idea of the vast number of angels is perhaps as successful as any that could be devised. Both angelic and material existence are a mystery to us. The Bible seems to favour the existence of a material world outside ourselves, such as is popularly now supposed to consist of infinitesimal atoms. The angels need not be so numerous as the atoms they actuate, and yet might be an overwhelming number. To anyone unaccustomed to consider such numbers, it may be of assistance to reflect as follows: We all are aware that a large number of atoms are required to form a wave in a brisk storm in an uninterrupted sea; there is no reason to suppose that a wave of intense light has fewer atoms to form it than an Atlantic roller: there are 50,000 such waves in every inch length; so that some notion may be formed of the process of calculating the number of atoms requiring to be set in motion as we gaze on that beautiful star Sirius, say 4,000,000,000,000 *miles* distant, in order to enable his intense light to reach each one of the eyes of even only one human spectator. Our experience therefore of matter is sufficient to allow us to admit that St. John's figures are likely to be, not poetical exaggerations, but poetical under-estimates.

13.—*Every created thing.* We may as well suppose St. John to include animate and inanimate creation as uttering this praise. It is an ancient Hebrew metaphor much used in the Psalms, and may not be scientifically analyzed. It is useful to have this case of metaphor in mind as a just caution when we are desirous to press similar descriptions, elsewhere in these visions, to furnish us with scientific truths. The expression seems usually to mean only things having life, such as may be eaten, for instance; it is only used in 1 Tim. iv. 4; James i. 18; Rev. v. 13; viii. 9.

NOTE ON THE EVOLUTION OF MAN.

Whatever led to the development, or evolution, of man up to Adam's time, we may compare the account of his origin in the first book of the Bible with the revelation of his condition in the last book. In the first chapter of Genesis is an account of the gradual formation (or *creation*, if we can keep the simple meaning of that term), of the world, and ultimately of man. Man is not there described as the highest animal. Though he is an animal, he is also something more, much more—made in God's image, and according to God's likeness. Whatever that may mean, he has power over all other things, and received God's commission to be 'fruitful and multiply,' and to 'fill and subdue the earth.' He had also God's promise of continual sustenance through the things which would grow out of the earth, largely in response to his toil.

The 'generations,' or account of heaven and earth, following Gen. ii. 4 are, like similar accounts further on (vi. 9; x. 1; xi. 10, etc.), the history of the life of Adam and his successors from man's point of view, supplemented by such additional description as is sufficient to explain God's action so far as we are intended to know it. The description of the country selected and prepared for Adam (Gen. ii. 5, 6), as being without any grain or vegetable grown on tilled land, or 'field,' and also without rain, need not apply to the whole earth in a geological sense.

But man, even when thus the established lord of creation, had not reached his highest stage. God's design for him, perhaps represented as being contained in the sealed scroll, was that man should become fit for heaven, and should be so adjudged before the hosts of heaven and hell, after an unimpeachable trial. In order to effect this trial the scheme of salvation was arranged.

A perfect representative man was formed, mature, yet innocent, secured from all but one simple test of obedience, but subject to the same affections as other then existing men, and (Gen. ii. 7) perhaps with a free will beyond them, and also exposed, like other men, to temptation, through his affections, by the devil. He failed, and was sent out into the world condemned, clearly and officially, to the condition in which men have since lived, and presumably were living before. His conduct justified God's treatment and discipline of all. All were condemned in him. In the scheme of salvation Adam and Christ are the two especially prominent figures. As one is called the first, so the other is called the last, *Adam*, or *man* (1 Cor. xv. 45). Adam brought us into the scheme of salvation; he showed how many barriers must be broken to make man fit for heaven, and justified the discipline and severity of the scheme. Christ saves out of the scheme all who accept salvation. The account in Gen. ii. 4 begins human history with Adam, *i.e.*, it gives an account, divinely inspired and supplemented, of man from man's point of view. It is very brief, and in our present state of knowledge of the force of the Hebrew tenses, is somewhat obscure. Perhaps we should take every verb in Gen. ii. 4-21 as historic present, except 'hath not rained' (ver. 5), and 'hath not been found' (ver. 20); but one of the clearest parts of it is the curse pronounced on Adam, under which men have lived ever since, and, so far as we know, may have lived before, and which runs wonderfully parallel to the third and fourth seals (Gen. iii. 17-19).

CHAPTER VI.

ORIGINAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

1 AND I saw when the Lamb opened one out of the
seven seals; and I heard one of the four animals
2 saying—as if a voice of thunder, ‘Come!’ And I
saw, and, see! a bright horse; and he seated on
him having a bow! and a crown was given him:
and he came forth conquering, and in order that he
should conquer.

3 And when he opened the second seal, I heard the
4 second animal say, ‘Come!’ And another horse
came out, bay; and it was given to him seated upon
him to take peace out of the earth; and that they
will slay one another; and a great sword was given
him.

5 And when he opened the third seal, I heard the
third animal saying, ‘Come!’ And I saw: and, see!
a black horse; and he seated on him having a pair
6 of scales in his hand! and I heard as if a voice in
the middle of the four animals, saying ‘A day’s
ration of wheat for a day’s pay; and three rations
of barley for a day’s pay: and do not injure oil and
wine.’

7 And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard a voice
8 of the fourth animal saying, ‘Come!’ And I saw:
and, see! a pale-gray horse, and he seated on the
top of him! he has a name—Death; and Hades was

following after him : and authority was given them over a quarter of the earth, to kill with broadsword, and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

9 And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw below the altar the souls of those who had been slain on account of the word of God, and on account of the
10 testimony which they had : and they cried out with a loud voice, ‘ Till when, the Master holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on the
11 dwellers on the earth?’ And there was given to them to each a bright dress ; and it was said to them that they should stop yet a little time, until their fellow-servants also, and their brothers, who are about to be killed as also they were, shall have been completed.

12 And I saw when he opened the sixth seal ; and a great earthquake occurred ; and the sun became black as if a coarse cloth of hair ; and the whole
13 moon became as if blood ; and the stars of heaven fell into the earth, as a fig-tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a high wind ; and the heaven was
14 set apart as if a scroll rolled up ; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places ; and the
15 kings of the earth, and the grandees, and the colonels, and the rich, and the strong, and every servant and free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the
16 rocks of the mountains, and say to the mountains and to the rocks ‘ Fall upon us, and hide us from the
17 face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the anger of the Lamb ; for the great day of his anger is come, and who is able to stand ?’

THE FIRST SIX SEALS.

SECTION I. VERSES 1, 2. THE WHITE HORSE.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

1.—COME! Half the MS. authorities add ‘and see.’ The *come* alone may be used as an interjection, like *lo!* *behold!* as it is in colloquial English, to call attention to the symbol of a long procession of time or events.

2.—BRIGHT, or *brilliant*, was a word in Greek used in colour to describe several kinds of white; such as snow, or a dusty road, or a shade of gray horse.

Expository Notes.

1.—The first four seals* show the effects of the physical and intellectual laws upon man. They indicate the discipline due to his environment, under which his intellectual and social development will fluctuate or advance; and do not omit the spiritual experience which this environment will secure him. The seals do not represent real persons, nor real things; not princes, states, angels, nor devils; they are representative allegorical figures of life, death, disease, and so forth. The first four are not described as appearing in any particular locality, but the horses seem to imply ground for them to stand upon. The other two seals contain an appearance of the altar, and of earth and its inhabitants; but neither are said to be seen occurring in either earth or heaven; and they have the characteristic of allegorical pictures, rather than historical or dramatical scenes.

When the Lamb opened the first seal, St. John heard one of the animals saying, with a sound like thunder,

* The expression “first seal” is used in these notes often as an abbreviation for “the vision showed to St. John when the first seal was broken.” And so *mutatis mutandis* for each seal, trumpet, vial, etc.

‘Come.’ If this be the animal like a lion, it may express nobility and conquering power. The thunder is always associated with the direct voice of God. This voice appeared to sound like thunder: it did not necessarily appear to be thunder, any more than the eyes of the first figure (i. 14) appeared to be actually flames, or his feet brass; still, it must show the voice of God Himself united with that of the animal, to indicate that God had as close a connection as the animal with this seal. The white horse may mean purity, truth, innocence, and love. The bow and arrows, as symbols, may characterize the figure as slaying enemies or wild beasts, with an idea of protection of those He defends from close attack. Perhaps the notion of disabling what is hostile is attached to the symbol (Psa. lxiv. 7, 8). The crown is a royal one, a crown of conquest and supremacy. All the riders are representative allegorical figures, not real persons. This rider represents God’s truth, His Spirit, with His convictings, knowledge, gifts, and powers, working amongst men at the head of their physical environment.

SECTION II. VERSES 3, 4. THE RED HORSE.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

4.—BAY: the colour of flame or carrot; red or tawny.

SWORD: this is the sword then usual; not that translated *broadsword*, but the regulation military sword.

Expository Notes.

3.—When the Lamb opens the second seal there is no sound like thunder. The second animal says, ‘Come’; and if this be the one like a steer, it may mean obstinate and blind strife—hostility to the death towards any rival. The flame-coloured horse may refer to the fire of God’s judgment. In the case of God’s judgment, the trial is always a just one; and it decrees all that offends, and is

evil, either to destruction, or to destructive purification, symbolized by fire. Setting apart spiritual matters—such as justice, with which this vision, called up by the second animal, has nothing directly to do—war and contest on earth so far resemble the judgment of God, that the victor wins by destroying or ousting the vanquished. The rider is a symbol of that contest for the survival of the *fittest*, which is common to all kinds of animal, and indeed to all material life; for war and killing one another is the chief and most characteristic phase of this far-reaching contest, which, so far as material laws go, is still a necessity of material life. No connection with the first rider is mentioned—such, for instance, as would indicate that the seals follow the first rider as captives, or as allies, or as rival competitors; nor can they be successive, since the first rider never ceases conquering. The first vision is a symbol of a condition under which men will continue to exist throughout the age, or dispensation, to which this vision extends, and which allows physically unlimited development amongst men; and so must the others be also.

SECTION III. VERSES 5 AND 6. THE BLACK HORSE.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

6.—A DAY'S RATION, etc. This is a free translation, in order to avoid importing irrelevant details or obscure terms. The literal translation is: 'A choinix of wheat for a denarius, and three choinices of barley for a denarius.' A denarius was a frequent day's pay for a soldier, and for others; a choinix was one man's daily allowance. The denarius, about St. John's time, was being altered from 84 to the pound, of about 11½ oz.—an ounce more or less—avoirdupois, to 96. It was of, so-called, silver. That in which soldiers were paid was about $\frac{5}{8}$ of the denarius in general use. The choinix was a dry measure, holding

as much as our 'beer-bottle,' viz., about one and a half pints to two pints ; and there are traces of one—a sort of magnum—which held four pints.

Expository Notes.

5.—When the Lamb opened the third seal, the third animal said, 'Come.' If this be the animal with a face like a man, it may mean intellectual activity and political economy. The black colour of the horse probably indicates the absence of other colours: of white—innocence, joy, or mercy; of red—passion and violence; and so forth; for the colour was hardly appropriated in St. John's time to the devil and evil spirits, or to indicate active evil. In the second seal, that condition of our physical existence was implied under which, in a physical contest, the victory of one means the worsting of the other; so in this seal the condition is prominent that if one person has a thing, his fellow must do without it. The simplest illustration of this condition is that of food. It is a necessary condition of our material life that we cannot give away our food for others to eat without starving ourselves. This struggle for subsistence is a negative means of promoting the evolution and improvement of all material life by annihilating the weakest and least intelligent of every species. Amongst men it involves a continual struggle to obtain possession of things to live upon, or to sell or barter in order to obtain things to live upon. It is specially ordered by the laws of creation that a man can (as a rule) live by his work, and (as a rule) must work, or will work, to live. Also, while the mass will live day by day from hand to mouth, or, say, from New Year's Day to New Year's Day on the excess of earnings over outlay, yet a smaller number will save, or receive, the means of using luxuries, and of having leisure. We say *as a rule* because this seal ceases to be applicable in case of death, and is also liable to be interfered with by the

action of kindness, or esteem, or gratitude, as well as by war; but the conditions symbolized by this seal have held, and will hold, throughout this dispensation, or age, as a rule.

The rider seems to represent man's consciousness, or conscience, which we cannot but refer to a more intimate and direct presence of God's Spirit than we do the laws of inanimate matter.

SECTION IV. VERSES 7 AND 8. THE PALE HORSE.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

8.—A PALE GRAY, or *corpse-coloured*, horse.

HADES seems always used for the place of the souls, or lives, of those whose bodies are dead, and applies indifferently to both good and bad. It is a convenient term, borrowed from the heathen, for the Hebrew word *Sheol*, a word which for the place of a departed soul merely stands metaphorically for the place of a departed body; and it is employed in its literal sense, though as a poetical figure, in Deut. xxxii. 22: '*pit.*'

Expository Notes.

7.—When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, the fourth animal shouted, 'Come.' If this be the flying eagle, it probably does *not* mean a vulture, but represents the way disease and death strike here and there over the world, without any visible terrestrial agent. The interpretation of the seal is obvious. 'The last enemy that will be abolished is Death,' says St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 26); and this seal represents liability to casualty, and interruptions of men's lives and plans—the uncertainty which will attend the carrying out of any scheme or pursuit. Perhaps a fourth part is as near a proportion as we can estimate of crossed or blighted plans, to those that can be said to be worked to some result. We have to die

voluntarily or involuntarily to many things in this life, as well as to die to all at the end of it. Death itself, as the chief and most effective interruption of our affairs in this life, may represent them all.

SECTION V. VERSES 9 TO 11. THE VISION OF THE
MARTYRS.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

9.—The soul, or life, of a man is that part of him which, when the body is dead, remains alive. Various attempts have been made, in mythology and legend, to assign it an appearance and powers, always by trying to resuscitate in some qualified form the dress, and the powers of the bones, muscles, and brain, and especially of the affections and spirit, of the deceased.

TESTIMONY WHICH THEY HAD. This, in a legal case, would mean the evidence which, as witnesses in court, the functionary in charge of their case assigned them to bear, and which they did bear in court accordingly.

BELOW THE ALTAR. In xvii. 1 the harlot is described as sitting on many waters. The Greeks spoke of a town lying on a river, just as we do, meaning close on the shore of the river. In viii. 3 an angel is described as standing on the altar, meaning close up to it. We do not use *on* in this sense, but should say *at*. Here we have the word *below*, which is used by both Greeks and ourselves in speaking of fields lying below other fields, or a line on a page being below another line.

10.—DWELLERS. The word originally applies to *settlers* in a country or town, in our colonial sense. It means more than casually dwelling or passing through. *The dwellers upon earth* in this book always means those who make their abode on earth and have their treasure and hopes in it as distinct from Christian *sojourners* (1 Pet. ii. 11, and elsewhere). The literal meaning of

both terms is *dwellers*, the former being compounded with another word so as to mean *dwellers under* (the conditions and pursuits of), and the latter *dwellers beside* (as travellers temporarily sojourning by the way).

11.—DRESS: a complete suit of clothes.

Expository Notes.

9.—So far we have seen symbols of what affect man individually, as a self-interested moral and intellectual unit. Whether it be the truth of God displayed in His works, the rivalry of men, the impossibility of sharing the use of material things between a man and his neighbour for simultaneous use, or the liability to death, all primarily and directly affect each man himself, apart from the social effect upon Church, State, or any other social grouping.

When the fifth seal, the first of the last three seals, was opened, there appeared a group of souls, standing, or prostrate, or both, such being the ordinary attitudes during united prayer, below the altar, as worshippers usually would pray before an offering which God had appointed, for his acceptance, as a sweet savour. A soul includes all the life and powers of a man which do not perish with his body. These were the souls of those who had been, or should be, slain for delivering the testimony which God had given them to deliver during their lives. There must be caution in restricting the description of these as having been slain, to represent only those witnesses of God's truth upon earth who had actually been slaughtered as martyrs. It would then follow that the vengeance called for, and promised, was *only* for actual slaughter. It would seem more suitable to the vision, and to our Lord's words on the avenging all the blood of the prophets (Matt. xxiii. 34, 35, and elsewhere) upon such as should scourge or persecute any, as well as upon such as should kill any, if we take *slain* in a

figurative sense for all the hostile feeling prohibited by the command 'Thou shalt not kill,' such as is sketched by our Lord Himself (Matt. v. 21-24), and for all acts springing from that feeling.

The visions of the seals exhibit man's natural and intellectual environment; they would therefore be incomplete without this exhibition of the concurrent justice of God, which underlies all His works. God is here shown accepting the obligation to make good all suffering and loss, to which, under such a mechanical environment, men may be subject, either owing to their obedience to what they themselves believe to be the will of God, or to the testimony and remonstrances with which they proclaim to others what they believe to be the will of God.

The testimony which they had almost exactly gives the meaning and idea of St. Paul's (2 Cor. i. 12): 'The testimony of our conscience; that in holiness and sincerity of God'—here, of His *word*—'we behaved ourselves in the world.' Different outward callings, and different inward gifts, qualify for each individual the nature of the 'testimony which he has' to bear; but these souls include *all* kinds of men, and *all* kinds of testimony on account of the Word of God, so long as it be genuine in God's sight.

10. We have in the prayer of these souls reference to the one great *crux* of the philosophers, who would seek in intellectual advance the sufficient way to man's most perfect social development. No reason has yet been found for 'self-sacrifice' being wise and pleasant. It would be to prove a contradiction, for so soon as a man sees that such and such a course is really the most self-satisfying and alluring, there is no self-sacrifice in his taking it. The only true self-sacrifice, consistent with the mere reason of which the seals are illustrative, is where a man either puts some obvious pleasure or hope

out of his own power into another's, in whom he has reasonable trust that he will make it good, or more than make it good, or where a man voluntarily incurs loss or harm in reasonable trust that some other will 'avenge' or make it good. Compare our Lord's teaching (Matt. x. 40-42; Luke vi. 32-35). A man may reasonably go so far on entirely selfish grounds. Self-sacrifice for another's good only is not a fruit of mere reason. These souls appear to appeal to God to avenge their blood on those who dwell on the earth, referring to the typical Mosaic modes of purifying the land from blood guiltiness, and no doubt expecting the banishment of both the crimes and the criminals from the Kingdom of God, in which they hope to be citizens. As the word *slain* is used in a pregnant sense to include all lesser hostility, so the word 'avenge' must be allowed the same latitude, and must include all restitution and making good. As the prayer of the souls shows that their trust is in God, so the reply shows that God trusts them to have such a love for their brethren as will amply satisfy them for the delay of their own cause. God appeals, not to their reason or to their trust, but to their love for their fellow-servants.

Just as the position of the priest officiating at the altar is called *above* or *on* the altar (viii. 3), so the position of the worshippers is here called *below* the altar. The altar in heaven is either that of incense, or both the old altars united in one. And, indeed, the incense offered in the temple assumed a previous sacrifice; and Christ having, once for all, made that sacrifice, it is difficult to see that an altar of sacrifice in the vision, implying continual sacrifices being still made, would be a symbol with any real meaning. The lamb standing as if slain seems a simple symbol of Christ's completed sacrifice; and He is in heaven, and not in the vision of things about to happen on earth.

We must bear in mind that 'true,' in the prayer of the souls, always means literally *agreeable to truth*, including both *true* and *real*. The title *master* exactly answers to that of *servant*, and indicates that the souls recognise their true Master in God, as completely as He recognises them as His true servants.

This seal may well keep us alive to the fact that, besides the natural existence we see around us, there is treasured in the book of God an account of rewards and punishments which He will in due time administer; and this account, though it arouse no cry of recognition in nature, and is beyond the field of the universe, is as real as that which we see and feel. This banking *account* is *as good as gold* to debtor and creditor, and lies in safe custody. It evidently refers to justice to be administered on earth, but at the end of this *age*.

SECTION VI. VERSES 12 TO 17. THE GREAT DAY OF WRATH.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

12.—OCCURRED. We have no English word for the very simple and common idea of the Greek word. The nearest periphrasis, perhaps, is *came*, sinking the idea of motion from anywhere; or *happened*, sinking the idea of chance. However, *occurred* is the nearest word in the sense in which it is used of a thought, 'It occurred to me that,' etc., and sinking all idea of interference or obstructiveness.

COARSE CLOTH OF HAIR, probably a thin coarse blanket of black and brown goats' hair, used much in camp-life, for sacks, bags, sieves, clothes, and, amongst others, by St. Paul, for making tents. Its derivation is from packs for beasts of burden.

13.—HIGH wind. The Greek word *great* was used more extensively than with us; our word chiefly applies to size;

the Greek word does the same, but is more extended into figurative meanings than our word. The same Greek word *great*, which is here translated *loud* when applied to sound, is translated *high* when applied to wind.

14.—According to the scientific notion of the time, the heaven of stars was considered to be a sort of ceiling, or, in tent language, *purdah*, on which the fixed stars were set equidistant from the earth, or on which each moved in fixed array, according to its name.

MOUNTAINS were by some supposed to pin the earth down to something below to keep it in its place.

ISLANDS. As in early English, island means a land with a great extent of water about it. The Peloponnesus was so called by the Greeks, though it is no more an island than the isle of Portland, and others. In a general sense, we use the word *continent* to include any islands in close connection with it; and the Jews used the word *islands* for the Mediterranean localities, reached by sea, including ports actually on the continent.

Expository Notes.

12.—As the fifth seal showed the state of those who were slain to worldly schemes and success by the opposition of others who had no scruple about using to the utmost all worldly means, regardless alike of their moral aspect, and of their harmony with the Word of God, so the sixth seal seems to symbolize the state of such as set aside scruples, and make the best use of their intellect, of their physical powers, and of all the confidence they can obtain from others, to acquire and hold earthly success. It is a dark picture; for not only are the good worsted, but the work they would do is lost; for the winners have no notion of doing it. Perhaps the most complete illustration is the result that befell the Jews who prevented the Messiah from setting up His kingdom, but fell foul of the secular power of Rome in trying to set up their own.

Perhaps it was even best for them that they also were prevented, as they were, from setting up their own kingdom.

Those who are conscientiously acting under God's laws have an ideal and aim so much above earthly schemes that they are not symbolized as losing by any of these commotions. Their earthly treasures are not their own, and as stewards of them, they esteem it their gain to see the pleasure of their Master worked out in them. Even were the ten talents of their earthly trust taken away from them, and not restored, they hardly feel it to be a loss when they enter into possession of ten cities. Our Saviour never mourns the loss of His earthly kingdom, nor do His followers even mention it, on its own account.

The picture in the sixth seal makes the most striking of a class of cases a symbol for all. The first occurrence, an earthquake, fixes its scene to be earth, and earth's heaven, symbols of society and states, organized under ruling powers and guiding lights. In interpreting we follow the lead of the vision, and point out only a conspicuous illustration of its fulfilment. It applies to the present age, applicable from prehistoric times, but specially from the time of St. John up to our Saviour's taking the kingdom. The earthquake symbolizes the shattering of states and organizations of power, and is certainly not too strong a figure for the condition of the people who inhabited what is now France, Germany, Austria, and Britain, from about 100 years after St. John up to William the Conqueror. Taking a Roman emperor of St. John's time to represent the sun, fostering prosperity and peace and ordering the seasons of the Roman empire, the nearest approach to such a power within the time above mentioned—say Charlemagne's—could barely represent such a sun behind a blanket. Every subordinate power was held by the continual use of the sword. The subordination of the princes, dukes, counts, knights, etc., to the

emperor or king was purely personal, inasmuch as they were each absolute over the lives, deaths and property of all below them, and made their own laws for their own best advantage, free from all interference. For the multitudes there was no way out of it, no guiding star. The whole moon (*i.e.*, the moon throughout the whole month) became like blood, and the stars of heaven fell like unripe figs. Every few years the Western empire changed its capital; states were re-outlined; races of men moved bodily into fresh lands, enslaving or slaughtering all the former owners. Each change, made by violence, held by violence, and lost by violence and treachery, illustrated the vanity of earthly pre-eminence, not only in these, earth's noblest and best-armed clans, but in all who made in lower walks of life more humble efforts to obtain any success.

The struggle for existence, and for successive pre-eminence, is a necessity of those laws of God under which earth has its being and continuance for all who are not redeemed from them, and written in the 'Lamb's book' of another life. No earthly reason or law has yet been found under which the struggle can be avoided. Wherever the struggle has ceased, degeneracy follows, and (apart from very special interference from conscience, devotion, and other non-earthly power) has been accompanied by such misery as made death seem desirable. This seal represents the condition of men acting under earth's laws, and not controlling their actions by faith in any higher aim. The seal is a view of human economy, as distinct from natural existence. The earthquake, of which we have lived to witness specimens, implies more than an Indian dynastic change, or religious change of power, in which one set of rulers merely oust and take the place of another—very like a change of ministry in some South American State; it implies an upheaval of lower strata to the surface, a complete transfer of the foundations of

power from one class to another, as every mode of organization of men proved, however successful it may have been for a time, like the crest of a wave, which is unable to stand as a permanent structure. The most solid human erections have proved to be 'houses' built on sand; the most conspicuous of man's works, even after selection by historians for record, all prove unstable; old constitutions and aspirations perish, and new ones arise. Thus we see empire first overthrown; then follow government under hordes of barbarians, feudal kings, nominal kings under mayors, mixed kings and parliaments, empires, states, democracies, powers over taxation, states, and armies—all going on to a final ruin during the whole age covered by the seal. These are but a conspicuous sample of all the other worldly pursuits which touch every man and woman, from king to slave; worldly glory, worldly interests, worldly happiness—all are real, but imperfect, dearly bought, and perishable.

17.—It will be observed that the first four seals represent constant, and in their laws and nature unchanging, appointments of God—unchanging, though acting under changing circumstances, like the earth, rain and sun on growing vegetation. The last three seals, so far as described, seem to represent the changes, or growth, going on in man throughout the action of the first four. Those who bear true testimony to God's Word lose all that can be got from the seals. St. Paul describes such, more emphatically than St. John, as not *slain*, but *crucified*: 'They who are Christ's crucified the flesh,' *i.e.*, voluntarily, like Christ, submit to crucifixion (Gal. v. 24), as he says, 'In the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom' (causal, as through bearing His testimony) 'the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.' It is obvious that the career of such witnesses under the seals ends in a state of prayerful rest and hope. On the close of the seals there will remain this band of the dead still

to be recompensed, and a sure record is being kept of what will be given to those who have been slain throughout the seven seals. On the other hand, they who have lived to the world—as described by St. Paul in Col. iii. 5 to 10, for instance—experience the natural ruin of their schemes and hopes with fear and horror; they are left hiding in caves and rocks—seeking concealment, however forbidding and desolate—in dread of approaching retribution. On the close of the seals there will remain also a sure record of the retribution to be required of them.

CHAPTER VII.

ORIGINAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

- 1 AND, after this, I saw four angels standing upon the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that wind should not blow on the earth, or on the sea, or upon any tree.
- 2 And I saw another angel ascending from the sun-rising, having a seal of the living God: and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was given to injure the earth and the sea, saying,
- 3 ‘Do not injure the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, until we should have sealed the servants of our God
- 4 on their foreheads.’ And I heard the number of the sealed—one hundred and forty-four thousands (are)
- 5 sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel: out of the tribe of Judah twelve thousands are sealed . . .
- 6-8 [and so on, for the tribes Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphthali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zabulon, Joseph, and Benjamin].
- 9 After these (things) I saw, and see!—a great crowd, which no one could number, out of every nation, and tribes, and peoples, and languages,
- 10 standing in front of the throne, clothed in bright dresses, and palm-leaves in their hands, and (they) cry out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!’
- 11 And all the angels were standing round about the

throne and elders and four animals, and fell in front
 of the throne upon their faces, and salaamed to God,
 12 saying, 'Blessing and glory and skill and thanks-
 giving and honour and power and strength to our God
 13 for the ages of ages, Amen!' And one of the elders
 answered, saying to me, 'These who are clothed in
 the bright dresses, who are they, and whence did
 14 they come?' And I said to him, 'My lord, thou
 knowest.' And he said to me, 'These are they who
 have come out of the great oppression, and washed
 their dresses, and brightened them in the blood of
 15 the Lamb. On that account they are in front of the
 throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His
 temple; and He who is seated on the throne will
 16 pitch a tent over them. They will not hunger any
 more: neither will they thirst any more; neither will
 17 the sun ever fall upon them, nor any heat; because
 the Lamb between (them and) the throne will be
 their shepherd and guide them to life's fountains of
 waters; and God will wipe off every tear from their
 eyes.'

THE VISION OF THE FULLY REDEEMED.

SECTION I. VERSES 1 TO 8. SEALING THE SERVANTS
OF GOD.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

1.—FOUR CORNERS OF THE EARTH. The position
 assigned to the angels seems merely to show their com-
 plete control of every wind; as we say, from every *quarter*.
 So, symbolically, the touching every one of the four horns
 of the altar was a complete hallowing, as of access to
 God's acceptance from every side (Exod. xxix. 12).

3.—TREES. The word means fruit-trees, as opposed to
 timber-trees; but it is also used for trees in general.

4.—ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY-FOUR THOUSAND. In the Greek the word *thousand* here is feminine, and is so treated in xiv. 1. This shows that in St. John's mind the idea was not one hundred and forty-four thousand men, but one hundred and forty-four thousand bodies of men, each nominally a *thousand*, *i.e.*, the largest civil division in Israel, next in size to a tribe (Exod. xviii. 21). In this verse the word *sealed* is masculine, attracted into that gender by its immediate association with the 'sons of Israel'; but it seems only necessary to have the feminine attached to the word *thousands* once, to show that it is used as the name of a civil division, or a component of a tribe, wherever it is used for the number here sealed, or for the like number signed on the forehead.

Expository Notes.

1.—The words 'after this' (compare xv. 5; xviii. 1; xix. 1) signify a change of vision, a disappearance of one set of things and appearance of another, generally on the same scene; an *exit* and *enter*, rather than a change of scene. If anything, the expression indicates a close connection, rather than separation, of the visions between which the expression is used. As to sequence of time, it refers only to that of the visions, not to that of the events which the visions represent. We notice that the first four seals represent continued action of certain agents: of God's Spirit, of the rule of the sword, and of trade, and death. The fifth represents souls continually waiting for something which is formally promised, but which they have not yet received. This opens up a reference to something further to happen; and this something has not happened up to the close of the sixth seal, which represents a continual breaking up of earthly kingdoms, and the fall and hiding of king and slave in dread of something to come. So here, as in the fifth seal, the final climax has still to come; in the one case the reward

of the righteous, in the other the anger of the Lamb on the wicked. As we shall see, it is beyond the province of the seals to show this climax: the old earth and heaven will have passed away when that comes.

However, this climax is to be allotted to the seventh seal; and it is therefore clear that the events reserved to be indicated (if only by silence) in the seventh seal are consecutive to, and not contemporaneous with, the events represented by the previous seals. The interval between the appearance of the sixth and the seventh seals, seems, therefore, appropriate for an episode to show what was being done as regards the saints of God during all the time of the sixth seals. The seals, from their nature, almost leave these out; the fifth seal merely shows them as slain and waiting. We shall see that an episode is also shown between the sixth and seventh trumpets; whereas the three series of the Woman, the Seven Last Plagues, and the Harlot, are each separate and complete visions; not broken up to make way for each other. They allude to one another, but are not structurally interlaced. They form three opening chapters, of which the vision of the White Horse and his Rider is the fourth.

This episode, intervening between the sixth and seventh seals, shows four angels standing at the four corners of the earth in command of the four winds. We have similar language used by our Saviour (Matt. xxiv. 31) in prophetic conversation, in reference to the summoning of His elect, by blast of trumpet, 'from the four winds', which He explains by another customary metaphor—'from one end of heaven to the other.' These winds of the vision are hurtful winds. They are *winds*; not the word translated in John iii. 8 alternately *wind* and *spirit*. Such winds as these blow down houses (Matt. vii. 25), shake the reeds (Matt. xi. 7), and raise the sea (John vi. 18); indeed, the Greek word means just the same as

our word *wind* ; and in this vision will blow so as to cause 'hurt.'

In earlier prophecies the four winds blowing over a country or sea seem to mean the continual or successive attacks of surrounding hordes or nations, usually less organized than the nation blown upon. Thus in Jer. xlix. 36, 37 the Lord of hosts says, that the four winds from the four quarters of heaven (St. John here says from the four corners of earth) will scatter Elam in all directions ; and He will cause Elam to be dismayed before her enemies, etc. Judging both by the natural turn of this passage, and from the Hebrew poetical habit of repeating the same idea under different modes of expression, in such poems as this of Jer. xlix. 35 to end, and also from the historical knowledge we have of the way in which Elam was consumed and her princes destroyed, we should suppose the blasts of the four winds to mean hostile attacks. So in Dan. vii. 2, the beasts representing empires spring from the Great Sea, under the breaking forth upon it of the four winds of heaven ; and no doubt these organized empires sprung up owing to the continual attacks of, and conflicts with, surrounding peoples. The four angels of St. John must therefore represent an angelic power restraining, for a time, the inroads and attacks of hordes and peoples, already surrounding the land, and destined to blow right over it. The land is the Roman Empire (there was, indeed, no other organized empire in St. John's time), subsequently split up into Christendom. The sea here is not mentioned till after the land ; whereas it comes first in Daniel's vision. In the phases through which the territory and peoples of the old Roman Empire have passed, up to our time, it may well be said that it was often more sea than land—more disorganized than organized. The sea, however, in prophecy seems to represent not always barbarity, nor want of combination, but also the separation of peoples and tribes by the

natural sea itself; for the name of the sea is given by Daniel, whose proper names are real, not symbols; and we shall see that, as St. John's prophecy advances to later times—*e.g.*, to the downfall of Babylon—there are indications that the prophecy embraces a wider and wider area of Christendom, and that phrases in it seem quite to apply to the *world*, in our modern sense, and to the peoples extended on all the shores and continents of the actual ocean, just as Daniel's expressions applied to those of the Great Sea or Mediterranean.

In the verse, then, with which this episode opens, the angels of God are represented as restraining the inroads of hostile peoples, which are destined to sweep from all sides over the whole of the constituted governments and states included in St. John's prophecy—the then Roman Empire—and beyond it into what was then disorganized *sea*; and to strike against their dependencies, their motives of production, and their productive population—symbolized by *trees*. Here we must use the word *production*, not in the modern sense as opposed to *manufacture*, but as including all cultivation and manufacture, and those engaged in the work or protection of either. It is history—a succession of events—not allegory, that is being represented, as afterwards history is represented in the episode of the witnesses. Like the other episode, and like the whole of the historical visions, it seems to begin in St. John's time. It is very brief, and omits all preface as to how the angels came to be thus standing with the winds, and confines itself to one great event on earth—the sealing, nothing before or after.

2.—The other angel ascends from the *sun-rising*, or East, the source of the dawn and the sun, the direction to which the tent and temple looked. In this prophecy (xvi. 12) 'the kings from the *sun-rising*' are mentioned, whatever that may mean, but the expression does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. The song of

Zacharias (Luke i. 78, 79) (in the song of Zacharias the word is merely 'rising,' a word translated *East* in Matt. ii. 2, and in other places; no *sun* nor *day* is mentioned) may probably be relied upon for giving us the associations connected with a figurative use of the *rising*—*sun-rising* or *East*, in St. John's time. The light symbolized was one which should guide us out of darkness and death into life and peace. The *sealing*, like that sealing or mark shown to Ezekiel (ix. 4), distinguished the servants of God from those who were not His servants, and secured their salvation—whether from or under the hurt caused by the winds is not stated. This distinguishing mark seems likely to be that described in other terms by St. Paul (Rom. iii. 22), viz., the righteousness of God made apparent by their conduct, tested by God's law, and accepted by His grace. It does not refer only to the consciousness of the receiver that he is accepting grace and repentance from God; but mainly, like the *seal* of circumcision (Rom. iv. 11), to the outward evidence he gives. In this vision elsewhere (xiv. 1) the *seal* is the name of the Son, and that of the Father, a mark which our Lord always describes as distinct enough to men (Matt. x. 22; John xv. 21). The *sealing* is really that impressed by the Holy Spirit (Eph. i. 13; iv. 30), and both these types of public circumcision and baptism represent the *outward appearance* in our conduct, which necessarily results, if we do not wilfully grieve Him, from that Holy Spirit's work when He is so given to us. Still, the sealing, and the angel sealing, represent nothing physical.

After all is ready for loosing the winds so as to blow upon the earth and sea and trees, and when the angels are standing all ready to loose them, then the other angel comes up from the East just in time. He cries out—the literal meaning being about half-way between the English *cries out* and *screeches out*—to them to hold till the sealing shall be completed. The question now arises whether

this sealing by the angel, or marking by the two-horned beast (xiii. 16), be such that, when once put upon an individual man, it marks him permanently and fixes his eternal doom. There is no appearance of this, not even so much as there is in favour of circumcision or baptism doing this. It would seem assumed that all these marks are alike of the nature they would have in Abraham's time. The circumcision was a sign of God's unalterable determination to support His part in the covenant, but it was subject to the man being faithful on his part. So long as man lives in a state of probation on earth, no man can absolutely prove his neighbour's spiritual state on any physical or scientific evidence. In a court of justice, evidence given as to a man's character, if confined to mere facts, without any expression of conviction, really would not touch the question of what we ordinarily mean by a man's character. To turn to scriptural usage, there is no denial of the effective and eternal permanence of the *sealing* and *marking*, such as there is of circumcision (Phil. iii. 5-8), or of baptism (Acts viii. 13, 22, 23), though the possibility of its inefficiency is assumed, at least as a basis for argument (Heb. vi. 4-6). So long as a man lives, the Gospel is an authorized message to him (Mark xvi. 15; Col. i. 23), and, whether he be heathen or excommunicated heretic, Christ's Apostles and ministers are bound to seek to convert him. Again, so long as a Christian lives, he is bound to avoid, and Christ's Apostles and ministers are bound to protect him from, stumbling-blocks, or temptations to transgress by leaving the path of God's calling. Yes, verily, and by God's help he will do it. The final doom of each individual is fixed elsewhere, not while he is upon earth. It may be said that the liability to his final sentence is incurred on earth, but that is a different thing.

3.—The servants of God are sealed, as clay or soft wax is sealed; whereas the two-horned beast makes all to be

marked—literally *engraved*—with a chisel, but used for the *stamping* of coin, for hand *writing*, and presumably for *printing*. Our Saviour uses the figure of *sealing* (John vi. 27). It is a means of making apparent to others whose servants they are. It is done in (or *by*, as the instrument) Christ and the Holy Spirit (see also Eph. i. 13; iv. 30). As a mark, it neither is destructive, like puncturing or branding, nor do we read of any foreign substance added and laid on. It seems to imply that the bearer of it has some of the authority and commission of his master, analogous to what is imparted to anything else by means of a seal, such as a document, or will, or even a phial of medicine.

The mark of the two-horned beast (xiii. 17) is the number of his name. The marks alluded to by St. Paul (Gal. vi. 17) are properly punctures, made by piercing with a pointed instrument; though that word is also used for a mark burnt in with a hot brand. St. Paul, no doubt, refers to our Saviour's wounds on the cross, but by a figure which also implies that he is marked as recovered to be a servant of Christ, as distinctly as a runaway slave on recovery is marked by his master's brand. This *seal* is of a different character to either a *brand* on a runaway slave, or a *mark* made on a purchased one. Placed on the forehead, it cannot be like the name on the pebble (ii. 17), unknown to all but the receiver; but it would rather seem that the sealing is a mark visible to their fellow-men, and does not intrude into the hidden relations between each soul and God, such as are hidden to all but that soul and God.

It is stated that St. John heard the number sealed; not that he saw the sealing, nor the winds released, but the one hundred and forty-four thousands seem spoken of as the number, or as part of the number, sealed. The passage runs thus: 'And I heard the number (acc.) of the sealed (gen.) one hundred and forty-four thousands

sealed (nom.) out of every tribe of the sons of Israel; out of the tribe of Judah twelve thousands sealed (nom.),' and so on. We may contrast with this the construction of xiii. 18, where the verb substantive is expressed, 'Let him who has understanding calculate the number (acc.) of the beast (gen.), for it is a man's number (nom.), and his number (nom.) 666.' But there is such a confusion in the text of our oldest MSS. as to justify the argument that the original text was very idiomatic, if not confused. Of the three oldest MSS. one omits the words 'I heard the number of those sealed,' and so leaves St. John's words as a description of the sealing as he saw it done. The seal seems to be called God's own name (xiv. 1; compare Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7), and not any *number* of God, nor of the woman clothed with the sun, nor does she cause any mark to be given.

5.—In making up the number of one hundred and forty-four thousands by twelve thousands from each of twelve tribes named, the tribe of Dan is left out, a tribe which, though possibly extinct in St. John's day, could hardly have so failed that not one from it was sealed; but it is obviously needless to investigate the names of the twelve tribes, or of the twelve apostles, since throughout the whole vision all proper names are symbolical, not real. We may pretty certainly infer that *thousands* is used as the largest of the divisions, next to tribes, into which Moses divided the nation (Exod. xviii. 25, Num. i. 16), and this division is adopted in prophetic writings (Micah v. 2, LXX.), much as we might use the word *houses* or *families* as the largest subdivision next to a *tribe*. In any case, a '*thousand*' means one of an organized system of congregations or bodies of people, into which, whatever the exact number in it may be, no individual is received unless he fulfil certain qualifications. Those admitted into the bodies described as thousands are each marked in such a way as to carry on their

features (to preserve the figure of the symbol in the vision), a character which distinguishes them from other men. It may be meant that all of each tribe were sealed, and that there were twelve thousands in each tribe, for they are not mentioned as a portion of more. It seems that the number one hundred and forty-four thousands sealed continues a permanent number in the vision (xiv. 1), like the twenty-four elders or the seven churches. It certainly represents a body of people existing as a body on the earth at any time treated of, liable to be hurt by the four winds, and presumably existing during the whole time of the four winds blowing. They show before men the graces and gifts of God, and it is not said that the sealing will protect them from hurt by the four winds, or from persecution, or from any earthly contingency; but it obviously makes them living witnesses before the world of the name which they bear on their foreheads.

SECTION II. VERSES 9 TO 17. THE UNNUMBERED
HOST.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

10.—PALM-LEAVES: probably originally applied to a stem of palm-fruit and leaves, used to ornament a doorway or triumphal arch on festive occasions. This word was afterwards applied to the more portable spray or leaf carried by each person in a festive procession, whether palm or not.

14.—BRIGHTEN. Only used in the New Testament at the end of Mark ix. 3. The word is used for the dawn brightening the eastern sky, and also for bleaching cloth.

15.—SERVE, *work for*, or else *perform religious service*.

TEMPLE: always the covered temple, or *shrine*, in St. John.

PITCH A TENT. Though this word is much more frequently applied to pitching *tents* than to anything else,

the word *tent* is not the original meaning so much as a *shelter*, and came to be applied to temporary stages in a market, and so to dwelling-houses and temples.

17.—LIFE'S FOUNTAINS OF WATERS: called in xxi. 6 'the fountains of the water of life.' In xxii. 17 neither fountains nor river is mentioned, but 'water of life' is spoken of. It is likely that 'life' is here put first for emphasis, to impress the contrast with the waters they had drunk under oppression while on earth, and applies to the waters, not to the fountains.

Expository Notes.

9.—After this vision of the body of the sealed on earth, St. John was shown a vision of a white-robed crowd in heaven, representative, not on the model of the figures in the seals, not of dispensations, but of real men. They would include those whose lives were taken away, and who were seen in the fifth seal crying out from below the altar.

This vision is introduced and explained to St. John by an elder, as if he in some way specially belonged to it, or it to him. If the animals represent the material (whatever that be, for we only know it by the impressions on our minds) and intellectual powers of nature, the elders will represent some higher enthroned powers, actuating the spirits of men on earth; and, at all events, the elders fulfil none of the usual conditions of visions of men beatified. This crowd represents *all* the beatified saints from the creation to the end of the world, though some may be there before, and some after, the events shown as going on upon the earth. Compare our Saviour's words in John viii. 56: 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad.' The one hundred and forty-four thousands sealed, like the twelve tribes of Israel, will include a long succession of men living on earth during many years; but this crowd,

gathered out of every nation, tribe, people, and language, must be shown as independent of time, and must include all who ever were amongst the one hundred and forty-four thousands on earth. This crowd in the white robes of righteousness, and with the palm branches of victory and peace, ascribe to God, not *creation* (iv. 11), as did the animals and elders, nor *worth*, as did these very angels when the Lamb undertook the scheme of salvation (v. 12); but they ascribe *salvation* itself, *i.e.*, making safe and sound. It is the same word as is used by the Apostles in their appeal to our Lord in the boat (Matt. viii. 25), and a favourite with our Lord Himself when He healed the sick (Luke vii. 50; viii. 48; xvii. 19; xviii. 42), and, as if that raised God's glory to its highest perfection, they fall before Him on their faces, and assign to Him sevenfold praise for ever. This time their adoration is not heard only, but seen, by St. John.

Yet these white-robed ones are not mixed with the heavenly host; they are on the same scene, theatrically speaking, as the animals and elders. Before the seals were opened the four animals and twenty-four elders took harps and led the praise, and the heavenly host joined in, and declared the Lamb worthy of sevenfold praise; but now, at the close of this episode, the white-robed lead the praise, and the heavenly host join in and declare sevenfold praise to God for His salvation. From analogy we infer that the white-robed represent the risen saints acting upon earth, though not on the footing on which they acted during life upon earth, but on some footing analogous to the cherubim or spirits represented by the animals, and to the guardian angels or spirits represented by the elders.

These white-robed, again, are distinguished, both for what they have gone through as children of Adam, and for what they have done, under that tribulation, as sons of God. What they have all done is to wash and brighten

their dresses in the blood of the Lamb. This washing, of which baptism is a type, 'not putting away of the filth of the flesh, but inquiry of a good conscience after God' (1 Pet. iii. 21), represents the 'repentance,' or mingled dissatisfaction and amendment, which our Lord preached from the beginning of His ministry (Matt. iv. 17; John iii. 3) to the end (Mark vi. 12). The brightening their dresses represents the power, purity, wisdom, happiness, love, and peace of their external conduct—the light-giving fruit of the spirit. From *oppression*, which represents the aggression of all evil, they will be protected, as the chief of an Arab tribe protects his family by raising a tent or shelter over them. Perhaps there is no safer protection in the world of ordinary life. Even all their necessities, and due safeguards of their health and comfort, will be thought of and provided for. They will not have a pain or disappointment, or any liability to further death.

CHAPTER VIII.

ORIGINAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

- 1 AND when he opened the seventh seal, silence
occurred in heaven for about half an hour.
- 2 And I saw the seven angels who stand in front of
3 God; and seven trumpets were given them. And
another angel came, and stood at the altar, having a
gold censer; and much incense was given to him,
that he should give it to the prayers of all the saints
4 upon the gold altar in front of the throne; and the
smoke of the incense ascended to the prayers of the
saints from the hand of the angel, in front of God.
- 5 And the angel has taken the censer, and he filled it
out of the fire of the altar, and threw it into the
earth; and thunders and voices and lightnings and
6 earthquakes occurred; and the seven angels who had
the seven trumpets got themselves ready that they
should sound.
- 7 And the first sounded: and hail and fire occurred,
both mixed with blood, and were thrown into the
earth; and the third part of the earth was burnt up;
and the third part of the trees was burnt up; and all
green grass was burnt up.
- 8 And the second angel sounded: and as if a great
mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea;
9 and the third (part) of the sea became blood; and the
third (part) of the created things in the sea, those

which have lives, died; and the third (part) of the ships were destroyed.

10 And the third angel sounded: and a great burning star, as if a lamp, fell out of heaven, and fell upon the third (part) of the rivers, and upon the fountains of
11 the waters. And the name of the star is called Wormwood; and the third (part) of the waters were turned into Wormwood; and many of the men died from the waters, because they were made harsh.

12 And the fourth angel sounded: and the third (part) of the sun was struck, and the third (part) of the moon, and the third (part) of the stars; that the third (part) of them should be darkened, and the day should not appear the third (part) of it, and the night in like manner.

13 And I saw one eagle flying in mid heaven, saying with a loud voice, 'Woe! woe! woe! the inhabitants of the earth! out of the voices of the trumpets of the three angels who are about to sound.'

THE UNFOLDING OF THE MISSION OF THE ANGELS.

SECTION I. VERSES 1 TO 6. THE SIGHT OF THE ANGELS.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

1.—ABOUT, as St. John uses the word (John i. 39). 'The hour was *about* the tenth.'

2.—TRUMPETS, *war-trumpets*, but used also for sacred and other purposes.

3.—AT the altar, as a money-changer stands *at* his table. Literally, the preposition means *on*.

Censer. The word used means everywhere *frankincense*, except here and in the fifth verse. It is found in other parts of the New Testament.

5.—EARTHQUAKES. The Greek word always used for earthquakes is merely *quakes*.

Expository Notes.

1.—We have now all the preliminaries for the opening of the seventh seal, as it were, collected and marshalled ready. Earthly governments, ranks, fortunes, and divisions, have come to a dead lock, to a common ruin. The four angels have appeared; the sealing of the one hundred and forty-four thousands on earth has been effected; the crowds of the white-robed have been added, after their oppression, to the animals and elders; all the angels are seen collected round the whole company.

On the opening of the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about half an hour. Simply nothing came, and St. John can tell us nothing. The pause was enough to show that the next vision was a new one, and that the vision of the seals was over. Such a space may be necessary in order to show a blank; but it is unnecessary when one vision succeeds and replaces another. No such silence is indicated anywhere else, nor can it be explained as a vision (so to speak) of some time when there was nothing being done, by God or man, upon earth. The word *silence* occurs nowhere else but in Acts xxi. 40.

2.—St. John next saw the seven angels who stand before God, and another presiding at the altar. No lampstand is mentioned as standing in this temple; the only lampstands seen were in the first vision on earth.

In Joshua (vi. 4, etc.) we have seven priests ordered to blow seven trumpets in front of the ark, which represented God's presence. In that opening of the final war of extermination, or expulsion, of the Canaanitish possessors of the Holy Land, the ark and priests went out from the camp, and made a circuit round the scene of contest; but no part in the actual contest was taken by the priests. In this case the angels with the trumpets are those who

stand before God as officiating priests in the heavenly temple ; and apparently they blow the trumpets, one by one, where they stand, and take no further part in what follows. Another angel, typified on earth by the High Priest, offers incense, symbolizing the acceptance and furtherance of the prayers of the saints. No doubt the scene is a heavenly symbol of the same truths of which the earthly temple worship was a type ; so that the angel at the altar represents Christ as Priest. The vision must have occurred at the end of the half-hour, and is introduced by the simple 'And I saw.' The series of these trumpets, which must be under the regimen of the seals, concerns the political and religious development of beings possessed of intelligence and conscience, and endowed with powers of responsible choice and free will. That the siege of Jericho was a type of this, considering who was the Author of both, we may accept more confidently than any prophetic analogy David drew, in his Psalms, between the kingdom of Israel and the perfect kingdom of Christ. We may feel as secure that like forms will be found in the early and developed conditions of Christ's church and kingdom, as a 'scientist' does of the permanence of like forms in the organization of early and of developed animals or vegetables. The ruin does not occur, in either case, till the last trumpet sounds. During six soundings the events of note in Christendom are the workings within Christendom of the dwellers upon earth ; and, as given in episodes, the condition of the saints during these same events—during this suspension of the final judgment.

The time of the events in the trumpets is clearly not before St. John's life (iv. 1), and it only remains to consider how far they are contemporaneous, and how far consecutive. Actions of men must each occupy a definite time, must each have a beginning and an end, and either beginning or end will be clearly indicated in the vision,

if it be revealed at all. In the case of Daniel's vision it is only revealed incidentally and imperfectly. The four beasts (Dan. vii. 3, B.C. 539) were in existence in Daniel's time, and, one would infer from the parallel vision (Dan. ii. 44), exist now; but they reached their climax, and acted the part which assigns them their position in the prophecy successively. The first four trumpets seem to be contemporaneous also, all acting through the whole time from the first breaking up of the pagan empire until the complete breaking up of every form and principle of its constitution as a power, or collection of powers. They are not like Joseph's ears of corn and kine, merely repeated representations of the same events (see viii. 13); for, unless the whole seven were repetitions, it would be quite unprecedented that any two should be so. That the chief developments of the four trumpets should all occur at once, seems as unlikely as that the four beasts of Daniel should culminate together, though there is nothing in his vision (Dan. vii. 3-8) to show that they did not.

SECTION II. VERSE 7. THE SOUNDING OF THE
FIRST ANGEL.

Expository Notes.

There seems to be some parallel between this and the Egyptian plagues (Exod. ix. 22; x. 14)—enough to suggest that so much of the earth and trees as was in a condition to be destroyed was destroyed, and the rest would recover. All green grass would be burnt up, and then all would recover. There is no duration of the plague given. Presumably the trumpet did not sound all through the storm, but only gave the signal to begin, unless, indeed, as in the siege of Jericho, all the trumpets, as they successively began, were blown continuously (Josh. vi. 4; but the point is not very clearly decided). Therefore

the second trumpet might follow the first at once, and bring on the second plague contemporaneously with the first, or with part of it. The storm of the external invasion of the Roman Empire, the *earth*, certainly destroyed a third part of the organized government and state processes, and also a third part of the nobility and merchants, their property, power, stores, and manufactories; and where these invading hordes swept with their full force (*e.g.*, over the Euphrates, Danube, North Italy, and Africa) all the cultivation and all the country people were swept away, so that even the sites of populous cities were converted into waste ground, to provide a run for horses. And after the incorporation of the outer tribes into Christendom, this mode of warfare only subsided to a degree as the feudal times came on. In Edward III.'s reign it gave a character to the wars in Guienne (about 1366 A.D.). In the earlier half of the seventeenth century the Thirty Years' War, and the French inroads, were of similar temper. In our Queen Anne's time (1710 A.D.) the bombardment of a town was considered a noble action. The *earth* would represent all rulers, chiefs, and ruling assemblies or corporations in Christendom, and the institutions on which they, and the security of human affairs under them, rest. The *trees* may be all industrial groups for useful and remunerative manufacture or for beauty, and the property, customs, and social security upon which their growth and fruitfulness depend. The *grass* or open pasture would include all who get subsistence or remunerative employment without much store of skill or capital. The *fire* would imply a selection of the fittest by acute means beyond mere business competition, by actual combat, and by violent suppression. Hail would include impressment, taxation, forced exactions by armed bodies, and restrictions, whether of movement of persons or goods, or of markets. The *blood* always seems to mean slaughter,

and in this trumpet is mixed with the other two symbols, fire and hail. It is clear that the trumpet must continue to sound so long as, under some sanctioned laws of war and honour, *war* remains the necessary and ultimate appeal for adjusting and resettling the constitutions and civilizations of Christendom.

SECTION III. VERSES 8 AND 9. THE SOUNDING OF
THE SECOND ANGEL.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

8.—THE THIRD PART is exactly our English *a third*. *Part* is not in the Greek.

9.—HAVE LIVES, that is, animal life. Life was not recognised in vegetables in the age of St. John.

Expository Notes.

8.—At the blast of the second angel a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea. Mountains represent both means of protection in their fastnesses, and means of destruction in their avalanches (vi. 15, 16). But this is *not* a mountain, and is all on fire; it is an immense offshoot of war and violence from civilized Christendom, its structure or basis is their codes of war and honour, and it affects the whole sea. The sea, in Daniel's prophecies, represents the mass of disunited, unfixed states or tribes on the Mediterranean continually in tumult and change. The sea, in his vision, produces out of itself beasts which rule on land, which have a living body, such as Christ's Church has, but are sprung from a totally different stock, and they stand on *earth*, on a solid basis of civilization. In this vision of St. John's there are no beasts, and ships are mentioned. Except that ships are substituted for trees, the effect of this fiery landslip seems to be to reduce the *sea* to about the same condition as the earth, as is described in the first trumpet. We cannot take Daniel's figurative sense of

sea, which he restricted to the Mediterranean; but it will here mean all the world outside Christendom, usually reached by sea, and the nations and tribes, usually reached by *ships*. On to these countries and tribes the armed powers will throw themselves, not in a peaceful alliance, but blazing together in a bloody struggle for survival, no two being able to occupy a new country in peace together. The *ships* will include shipping enterprise, property, interests, facilities, and security, and all persons thereon engaged. The *created things in the sea* would mean, as in Daniel, the tribes reached by sea, such as those on the Mediterranean who wonderfully produced our present civilization.

SECTION IV. VERSES 10 AND 11. THE SOUNDING OF THE THIRD ANGEL.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

11.—WORMWOOD, *absinthe*; here spelt with a capital, because St. John gives the word, which is always neuter, a masculine form; whether because *stars* are masculine in Greek, or because it is the symbol of a man, or men, the translation leaves uncertain.

WERE TURNED INTO. The Greek, as in John xvi. 20, is literally *became into*.

HARSH. *Bitter* is too definite a quality. The Greek word is applied to a javelin, or a man's tongue (speech)—*pointed*; to *pungent*, *bitter* or *salt* water; to *pungent* smells; *piercing* pain; *cruel* or *severe* punishment, torture.

Expository Notes.

10.—Here again we find included the same characteristic as in the two former trumpets—fire; the selection, by the power and discrimination of man, of the fittest, and the consumption of what he deems unfit. As the *land* and *sea* are parabolic—as much symbolical as literal—so

here. A star is a thing giving guidance, not only to men's paths by sea and land, but (as was taken for granted) to their destinies. It was thought that in the courses of the stars man had the most immediate sight of God's direct appointments. In prophecy a star is a thing giving guidance, like a church, or teacher, or body of teachers. It may include instruction, religious or civil; in philosophy, in law, in arts, and in politics. This particular star gave light as well as guidance, like a lamp, or true church. In the vision of the earth and its heaven it is seen to fall out of its original position amongst the ruling powers of earth. Though not a lamp, it appears, in its likeness to a lamp, as giving light, religious and moral, of a kind, like a real church. The waters and fountains on earth are a similar metaphor to those divine waters promised, in each man who seeks them, by Christ in His conversation with the Samaritan woman — knowledge, motives, mind (likes and dislikes), strength, growth, life, content, etc. As the star gives the earthly counterpart of these as if a church, it here is possibly an antichristian church; but more probably a general bitterness, and, of course, misunderstanding of religious matters, which would embitter all religious teaching and preaching, and which would convert to poison what would otherwise be pure springs of earthly truth and happiness, acting and reacting upon all, in and out of the church. The effect was death to many; and this, like the effects of the previous trumpets, may not be spiritualized so as to remove it from earth altogether; nor materialized so as to mean nothing but actual human death. It is both representative and poetical, as in iii. 1, 2, and must be interpreted accordingly of death of spiritual graces. It is likely to produce deaths of all kinds; although we must note that blood is not seen mixed with it, to indicate any special slaughter as characteristic of it. Final condemnation, and the second death (xx. 14; xxi. 8), are necessarily

absent from the series of visions, the express object of which is to show God's dealing, during a certain 'age,' with souls, good and bad, upon earth; and the very basis of these visions is, that souls do not perish during that age. Except in the phrase 'second death,' used in the message to the churches (ii. 11), and in reference to the Millennium (xx. 6), and final judgment (quoted above), the word 'death' seems to be always used either, literally, for natural death, or, metaphorically, for the death in the soul of spiritual grace and activity, which resembles natural death.

It is well to notice that the fall of the star can hardly refer to political bitterness. No marked change has taken place in the bitterness of rival schools or parties on economical or political questions. Whereas the total fall of the pagan religious system, with its Imperial Augurs, enticing and distracting shows, intimate blending of religious ideas and observance with every domestic relation and public service, seemed to leave the heaven of Government half empty. From that time the religious guides were outside the structure of executive power in the Christian States: they had fallen to earth, and erected their power upon the people by preaching a poisoned religion.

SECTION V. VERSES 12 AND 13. THE SOUNDING OF THE FOURTH ANGEL.

Expository Notes.

12.—No agent appears causing this blow, as one would expect, judging from the previous trumpets; but the affliction itself is the blow with which the luminaries are struck. It is a curious affliction: a third part of the luminaries were darkened, probably, in fluctuating, unsteady, and unequal degrees and intervals. The description covers both contingencies; the sun, moon, and stars may be bereft of

a third of their brightness, and the day and night likewise; or the luminaries may be severally extinguished a third part of their time, and the day and night be wholly blackened a third of their time; but neither of these things need occur everywhere at once. The first meaning seems to be the one prominent in the writer's mind. As the third trumpet referred to a political guide of quasi-religious principles, *as if* a lamp, like the Pharisees or the Sadducees sitting in Moses' seat, and really being *the* religious guides whose teaching our Saviour Himself will justify, if in conscientious ignorance men follow them (Matt. xxiii. 2, 3), so does this trumpet refer to political guides in practice. The luminaries represent the powers *de facto* by which civilization and material prosperity are guided. This trumpet seems, like the last, to have been in force from St. John's time. Luminaries and administrators of all sorts have had their notions, powers, and objects fluctuating—now the higher powers, now the lower; now one sort of light, now another—in a way to contrast strongly with the great powers outside Christendom, ancient or modern, in which dynastic changes mean not much more than a change of ministers does in America or England.

13.—An eagle flying alone in the face of the sun at noon represents a provision by which conspicuous warning is given to all the earth of three troubles not yet begun, but immediately to begin. The choice of an eagle as the bearer of the warning can hardly be taken except as an omen of military activity. It is probably associated with the Roman eagles, or military standards; possibly with vultures; perhaps with that temper which was in the future to cover the shields of knights and the standards of nations in Christendom, so often, with the emblem of an eagle. It may mean the unexpected and sudden coming of widespread trouble (Deut. xxviii. 49; Hab. i. 8).

CHAPTER IX.

ORIGINAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

1 AND the fifth angel sounded : and I saw a star fallen
out of heaven into earth ; and the key of the shaft
2 of the bottomless pit was given him : and he opened
the shaft of the bottomless pit, and smoke ascended
out of the shaft, as if smoke of a great kiln ; and the
sun and the air were darkened from the smoke of the
3 shaft ; and locusts came out of the smoke into the
earth ; and authority was given them, like the scor-
4 pions of the earth have authority, and it was bidden
them that they shall not injure the grass of the earth,
nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men
whoever have not the seal of God on their foreheads.
5 And it was given them (the locusts) that they shall
not kill them (the unsealed), but that they will be
tried by torture five months ; and their (the sufferers')
torture is as if torture of a scorpion whenever it
6 strike a man. And in those days men will seek
death, and will by no means find it ; and will long to
7 die, and death flees away from them. And the like-
nesses of the locusts ; like horses made ready for war ;
and upon their heads, as if crowns like gold ; and
8 their faces, as if men's faces ; and they had hair, as
if women's hair ; and their teeth were as if lions' ;
9 and they had breast-plates, as if iron breast-plates ;
and the sound of their wings, as if a sound of chariot-

- 10 teams of many horses running into war; and they have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails (is) their authority to hurt mankind five months.
- 11 They have a king over them, an angel of the bottomless pit; his name in Hebrew (is) Abaddon (destruction), and in Greek he has the name of Apollyon (destroyer).
- 12 The one woe has gone away: see! there is coming still two woes after these.
- 13 And the sixth angel sounded: and I heard one voice from the horns of the gold altar in front of
- 14 God, saying to the sixth angel—he who had the trumpet—Loose the four angels who have been bound
- 15 upon the great river, Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed who had been made ready against the hour and day and month and year, that they
- 16 should kill the third part of men: and the number of the armies of cavalry two myriads of myriads; I
- 17 heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and the riders on them, having breast-plates, fire-coloured, dark purple, and sulphur-like; and the heads of the horses as if heads of lions; and out of their mouths passes out fire and
- 18 smoke and sulphur. The third (part) of men were killed from those three strokes, out of the fire, and the smoke, and the sulphur which passes forth out
- 19 of their mouth. For the authority of the horses is in their mouth, and in their tails: for the tails are like snakes, and have heads, and in them (*i.e.*,
- 20 equipped or armed with these tails) they hurt. And the rest of men, who were not killed in these strokes, neither repented out of the works of their hands that they should not salaam the demons, and the gold, silver, brass, stone and wooden idols, which are able neither to see, nor to hear, nor to walk

21 about ; and did not repent out of their murders, nor out of their drugs, nor out of their wickedness, nor out of their thefts.

THE THREE GREAT WOES.

SECTION I. VERSES 1 TO 12. THE SOUNDING OF THE FIFTH ANGEL.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

1.—BOTTOMLESS PIT. This translation is adopted for the Greek word *abyss*, which literally means *unfathomable* ; and metaphorically, from the idea of the unfathomable ocean, means ‘boundless,’ ‘exhaustless.’ The Anglicized word *abyss* means a *bottomless pit*, and therefore nothing is lost by adopting this meaning. The notion in the mind of the writer, here and in Luke viii. 31, seems to have been the space below the earth, considered to be the exact contrast in itself and its spiritual inhabitants to heaven, but supposed equally boundless.

SHAFT. As the earth was considered a level kind of floor, with heaven above and the abyss of bottomless pit below, it only needed a shaft to be run right through the earth to open a passage into the *bottomless pit*.

5.—TORTURE. This seems generally associated with mourning and woe (xviii. 7, 10, 15), as if the mere pain or punishment inflicted were the prominent idea. Yet the usual meaning of the word is so connected (as in English) with the cross-examination of prisoners under torture, and, in the visions, also with fire and judgment, as to point to remorse attending the punishment ; such as must attend a punishment felt by the sufferers to be the just and inevitable result of their own choice ; still, not implying repentance. (Compare Heb. xii. 17.)

7.—LIKENESES, just in our sense, but applied more to

an image than to a picture. It would seem that the objects seen in the vision were not likenesses of actual locusts, and that St. John outlines in words a likeness of them as seen.

9.—SOUND. The Greek word is usually translated *voice*, being commonly used for any distinctive *sound*. It must be remembered, therefore, that in this translation, when the *voice* of thunders, trumpets, waters, etc., is spoken of, no more is implied than that the noise heard was distinctively that of thunder, trumpets, etc. Of course the *voice*, or *sound*, of a man or angel is his articulate voice in words. The English idiom, however, does not permit the *sound* of horses galloping to be called a *voice*, even metaphorically.

9.—LIKE SCORPIONS: literally the tails themselves are like scorpions; idiomatically it may mean *like the tails of scorpions*, or *like scorpions have tails*. It is a *loose* expression, as in xiii. 11.

Expository Notes.

1.—As to the sequence of these woes, and their duration. They are clearly beyond or outside the ordinary routine of rulers, teachers, and conflicts predominant within Christendom during the fulfilment of the trumpets. The origin of the first is in smoke from the bottomless pit, of the second from the earth beyond Christendom; of the third from heaven. It is most simple to consider the vision of the eagle as a mark of time in the history represented. We have no precedent to be found in the seals; but, if we consider the first four trumpets, we find in them a character quite different from the seals. The first four seals each symbolize a condition of man's environment, without beginning or end indicated during the 'age,' showing no origin, no climax, but simply continuance. The first four trumpets have each an origin: a storm of distress and slaughter; an avalanche

from the earth into the sea; the fall of a star; the darkening of all heaven's luminaries. Whether these trumpets represent things beginning successively or not, the events represented could not possibly come about suddenly. Christendom could not be considered to have arrived at the condition represented in each case by a trumpet, until events had gradually unfolded and completely realized the condition symbolized in the vision. That time is a very marked and distinct one: it forms the start of a new environment. So soon as all the conditions of the trumpet shall have been fulfilled, the world goes on under the new conditions; and the vision leaves it to go on, and puts no limit, and describes no result. Hence the only marked time in the events represented at which to date the warning of the eagle is *so soon as ever the first four trumpets have developed their distinctive action*, and, of course, during the continuance of that action.

As regards the character of the three last trumpets, though they affect, and have their action upon, the whole of Christendom, there is no indication of their extinguishing or upsetting any of the constituent order established in it, with an important exception in the second woe, in which a third part of men are killed. This killing may perhaps imply a loss of territory to Christendom, by the simple process adopted by the Israelites in Palestine, and by the Anglo-Saxons in England and America, of killing all the original inhabitants who did not quit or submit. If the *killing* have that meaning, of course over the territory so alienated the constituent laws and institutions of the old empire would be extinguished.

There is no termination of any of the woes, unless xx. 15 be considered so. The verse ix. 12 seems to be merely the prophet's description of what St. John saw. It does not say, 'The scorpions, etc., are gone away: see! the sixth angel sounded.' It applies to the vision, not to the events represented; which, as before, are left

in full action, just at their climax; and so of xi. 14. So far from any angel, or eagle, or character, in the vision coming and proclaiming one plague over and another to begin, an angel does appear who proclaims the plagues going on unfinished, till they will come to a completion during the seventh trumpet (x. 7).

The interpretation of the 'star fallen from heaven' is rendered very difficult, owing to the ambiguity about the meaning of *heaven*. No reason appears why, if the star fell from the earthly heaven, it should not be seen in the vision to do so. If it fell from the heaven of God's throne, the star could only be seen after its fall, since that heaven was not contained in the vision. That it was a spiritual being—an evil spirit—seems necessary, because throughout the book we have no instance of any but an angel, except this star, opening or shutting the pit. In xx. 1, an angel is seen going down from heaven to earth with a key, and he shuts the pit. Here a star fallen from heaven has a key given him, and opens the pit. Who the angel and the star were it seems useless to guess.

The smoke, perhaps, represents the dense mass of old Gothic religious notions and legends brought into Christendom by Gothic invaders, and spread over it wherever their conquering tribes settled down. Their notions, indeed, necessarily included notions of personal conduct and of tribal policy, and wherever the Gothic inroads extended, darkened the sun and air, *i.e.*, the imperial reputation and policy, as well as the imperial administration of the civil and military codes of Justinian and others which were previously prevalent over the empire. This somewhat chaotic smoke of Gothic religious notions gave birth to the systems of feudalism and chivalry. This Gothic code of spoliation and adventure, under the restraint of military subordination, had already reached its climax early in the eleventh century. It then so darkened all military and religious authority, that even

such leaders as it allowed invented the crusades in order to get rid of it. Long before that time, the hordes, issuing forth under the code of military co-operation, had subdued every kingdom in Christendom, including our own; but they then began to assume the more fanciful code of chivalry, not to the exclusion, but to the more plausible exercise of ruthless violence and murder. Chivalry came to full flower about the time of Edward III., after which it gradually went to seed, and its vigorous progeny are still potent in the armies and peoples of Europe, while the faded flowers of its old stock impart a highly-prized fragrance to romances and songs. As feudalism emerged from heathenism, Christianity became its professed religion, and State endowment its support; but Christian pretext and loyalty to the State were chiefly professed by the feudal leaders when useful to justify any wars, for territory or for pride, for which their not very stringent codes of honour could find no justification in politics or patriotism. Christianity itself was almost converted into a darkening smoke; not a light and guide. The feudal wars did not respect the labourer or the social communities; but, while careless of injuring them if they were troublesome, it was no part of the religion, policy, or honour of the warriors to exterminate them. These feudal chiefs and retainers, amongst themselves, too, never lost a chance of promoting the selection of the fittest by challenging, plotting against, or robbing anyone successful in winning this world's prizes—power, glory, wealth, or influence. The campaigning season is, perhaps, allusively referred to in the 'five months,' which is the accepted duration, more or less, of course, of a locust campaign. During that time the miseries inflicted on non-combatants were excessive. St. John's minuteness in describing the characteristics of the locust indicates that the interpretation must be that of a parable, in which each characteristic does not fully apply, but

gives one important point of comparison. We notice, then, how chivalry had the dash, and pre-eminently the actual embodiment of cavalry, aimed at, and commonly possessed, the despotic rights of crowned heads, and cultivated the appearance, not only of men, but of effeminate gentlemen, and the soft and polite manners and conversation of ladies. In Henry I.'s time (A.D. 1107), a synod held at Westminster under Archbishop Anselm passed a vote prohibiting the laity from wearing long hair (Hume's 'England,' p. 286, ed. 1830), so prevalent and marked had the custom become. Their weapons were like the teeth, and their hearts like the hearts of lions. They were physically and morally cased in iron, and delighted in heavy military charges. Following the successes of the chiefs, whether small or great leaders, there came exactions and confiscations, injury done by their followers to labour, to commerce, to literature, and to religion, which were all designedly crippled, kept down, and insulted, for the good or whim of the conquerors, yet they were not exterminated. As to the tendency of these warriors to destroy, their self-chosen crests of kites, eagles, vultures, lions, leopards, clubs, swords, and so forth, are unimpeachable evidence, to say nothing of their pictures, *e.g.*, of Spanish royalty at the head of huge brigades of steel-encased warriors on steel-encased horses, charging over helpless masses of comparatively naked Moslems in Africa. Even their 'Saints' were said, and believed, to appear on the field, and to join in such destructive carnage with rapture. It was a grand, but diabolic code.

SECTION II. VERSES 13 TO 21. THE SOUNDING OF
THE SIXTH ANGEL.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

14.—BOUND, *i.e.*, *put in bonds, imprisoned.*

THE GREAT RIVER, EUPHRATES, so-called first by God

in His covenant made with Abram, when his tent was pitched at Mamre, to the effect that his descendants, by a son he should have, would possess from the great sea, the Mediterranean, to the great river, the Euphrates. The Euphrates is so called only in Deut. i. 7, and (except here and in xvi. 12) never in any other connection.

16.—ARMIES. Not regular encamped armies. The word *army* here means an expedition, and hence an army, corps, or company of men engaged in a military or naval expedition or campaign.

17.—FIRE-COLOURED: a different word to *flame-coloured* or *yellowish carrot*; see note on vi. 4.

DARK PURPLE, literally the colour of some *hyacinth* or iris, seems from analogy to mean the dark dull purple of thick smoke.

SULPHUR-LIKE: presumably in colour yellow, but possibly the blue colour of sulphurous flame, like the sulphur breathed out of the horses' mouths, which could hardly be anything but sulphur flame. *Fire and smoke and sulphur*. Sulphur is particularly associated with the fire and smoke of volcanoes, and it was, in St. John's day, supposed to come direct from the bottomless pit or infernal regions. But we must not press our scientific idea of sulphur. The fumes of any kiln, or the 'choke damp' from any charcoal fire, are sulphurous enough for practical purposes.

18.—STROKES. The Greek word has the full sense of the English—strokes from beating, flogging, by fists, fortune, or armies, by axe, sword, club, or lightning, and metaphorically by God in calamity, plague, or defeat.

19.—TAILS. In reference to armies, such as are here pictured, the 'tail' is a Greek military term for the rear-guard, and would doubtless serve to describe the body of followers. An echo is called the 'tail' of a speech which it follows.

Expository Notes.

13.—The sixth trumpet is ushered in by a herald-like voice from the altar before the temple in heaven, ordering the trumpeter to loose the four angels on the Euphrates. An order of this kind is peculiar to this trumpet. The seven angels are God's formal ministers; they stand before Him (viii. 2), and the seven trumpets are given to them to sound, and, except, in this case, no further authority or command is given them; but they all get ready and successively sound, and events on the earth (of the old Roman empire) and sea and sky follow. It would appear obvious that these four angels bound on the Euphrates are *not* on the earth, of the old Roman empire, and do not come within the nations of the Christendom into which it was converted. The additional order given in this case came from the horns of the gold altar of incense (Exod. xxx. 1-3), and, whether uttered by the presiding angel there (viii. 3), or—as is more probable, since the angel is not mentioned here—by God, it at all events came appropriately to the prayers of all the saints for vengeance on oppressors. This association with vengeance gives the external invasions of Christendom an additional colour to those of Palestine under the Judges. The latter were chastisements, or discipline, of God's people, inflicted by the hand of their external enemies. This is both a chastisement of God's professing people, and a punishment or just vengeance for their internal oppressions, inflicted by the hand of external enemies.

If the *Euphrates* were literal, it would represent that river as the most effective and conspicuous source of the invasion; but, inasmuch as all other names—Babylon, Abaddon, Sodom, Gomorrha, Jerusalem—are *not* literal, but only conspicuous types, so we must take Euphrates as merely representative—as placing the rise of the woe on the extreme outskirts of Christendom. The Euphrates

was the land-boundary between the kingdom of Israel and the kingdoms of the East which successively overran all Palestine ; and, in sympathy with the old prophets of his country, the Euphrates is taken by St. John, in Asia Minor, as representing the exposed boundary of Christendom in general—in every direction. The woe is commenced by loosing four bound angels—bound upon the outskirts of Christendom. These angels can hardly be either heavenly angels, or angels similar to those of winds, or of waters, because such are never described as *bound*. But the angels of the seven churches are described as doing what their churches do, and as incurring blame or praise, and threats of punishment or reward ; and so it is consistent that the binding of these represents the binding of the temper and activity of the hosts, and therefore of the woes, with which they are entrusted. These hosts were bound—as it were, imprisoned—in the deserts, fettered by ignorance.

The Mahomedans first invaded Christendom, in Palestine, A.D. 629. In seventy years they had permanently conquered Egypt, Syria, and Africa. The Turks took from the Arabs India, Persia, and Syria up to the confines of Asia Minor, A.D. 1000 to 1050, and in this last year invaded the remaining empire. They took Constantinople in 1453. The suddenness of their rise, without any previous corporate existence, is fixed to an hour. The Mahomedans have ever since dated their years from the day of their origin, July 16, 582, on the day of Mahommed's flight from Mecca, of which flight, it may be said, the very hour is known.

The killing of a third part of men, *i.e.*, the men of the old empire, may be interpreted of the permanent conquest of about a third of its inhabited territory, by the extermination of every man who would not become Mahomedan, or would not submit to a most oppressive and contemptible servitude. But the vision admits of a double interpreta-

tion, strictly in accordance with the literal interpretation of the word *kill*. It is remarkable that the Mahommedans *killed* a third or so of the fighting power of all Christendom, besides permanently occupying and governing a third of its territory. In the two-thirds remaining of Christendom, something like a third met their death in expeditions against Mahommedans, and, what is more remarkable, almost entirely in carrying on frontier warfare. Most remarkable it is that it was not only the people of Christendom on the frontiers for the time being who fought, as would be natural enough; but for various crusades people collected from every part of the old empire—from every county, town, and one might almost say village—and perished in order to carry on the war on the extreme outskirts of Christendom, at the east end of the Mediterranean, and in a minor degree in Spain and Africa; so that the hosts of the four angels, even when unbound, still fought and slew in the outskirts of Christendom such as would be then represented by ‘Euphrates.’

The number of the armies was only *heard* by the prophet, not *seen*, as if it included all from beginning to end, not a muster made at any one time. This was also the case with the one hundred and forty-four thousands sealed (vii. 4). The *myriads* are, of course, round numbers; but they can hardly be taken as loose, merely symbolical numbers, because of the definiteness of the number *two*. It includes all the armies in and out of Christendom. Every town within the immense captured territory would have its garrison, and every moderate village would be ornamented by a sheaf of spears and flags, showing that a corresponding number of Mahommedan horsemen was quartered in the village. If the Mahommedans be considered as a standing army, every able man amongst them whose means permitted of his keeping a horse being ready for immediate action, the number of 200,000 is

not excessive as a number they may have reached at the time of their widest spread.

As in the fifth trumpet the characteristics of the warriors were given by a metaphorical description of the appearance and behaviour of the locust, so in the sixth trumpet, here, the description of the *warriors* rapidly slides into a fanciful one of the *horses*. It reminds one of the poetical description of the drilled Roman companies by the Northern bards as dragons, and of the non-combatants as gnomes, or dwarfs. The equipment seems to indicate fire-coloured breastplates worn by men and horses whose mouths emitted fire—smoke-coloured for smoke, sulphur-coloured for sulphur. This clearly enough refers to the use of Greek fire, and to more modern fire-arms and explosives, and to the division of military forces into portions severally trained to a particular arm. Guns drawn by horses, whose riders are in a sense non-combatants, and merely guide the horses and transport the guns, may be also indicated.

As an illustration, it may be mentioned that a military friend told me that, as he was halting in an open non-Mahommedan village in a peaceful Mahommedan country, governed by a prince of Arab stock, he saw a military officer of the prince's arrive on one of his non-periodical visits to collect tribute and other dues. This Mahommedan officer was quite the gentleman, as much so as an officer of our Guards, courteous, affable, and dignified. His first act was to unlimber a couple of guns and fire them down the main street, quite regardless of what damage or slaughter resulted. He then sent fatigue parties to view each house, and to collect the rents, and any unprepared or demurring villagers. What this military tax-gatherer did with the more substantial villagers brought up to him for unwillingness to pay the toll exacted, and him for his trouble, my friend did not learn : but it may certainly be said that he did what he liked with

them, subject only to his interpretation of what little he knew of the laws of the Koran. I suppose that some English travellers and missionaries have learnt, by experience, what it is to dwell under Mahommedan rule of a similar tone at the present day, within ten or fifteen degrees of the Euphrates. Such a tax-collecting expedition would be part of the *tail* of the conquerors; and the seizing of women and forcible conversion of men and education of children, and enslaving of all, would be parts of the hurt done by such tails.

This woe did not result in Christendom deserting its idols, nor its codes of ambition and acquisition, nor did Christendom cease to honour, confer titles on, and build tombs and statues to such amongst them as most distinguished themselves in following the old models, and to comparatively slight the humble-minded and humbly-employed servants of God.

CHAPTER X.

ORIGINAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

1 And I saw another strong angel descending from
heaven, clothed in a cloud; and the bow upon his
2 head; and his face as if the sun; and his feet as if
pillars of fire; and he having in his hand a little
3 scroll open. And he set his right foot on the sea
and the left on the earth, and cried out with a loud
4 voice, just as a lion roars. And when he cried out
the seven thunders talked their own voices: and
5 when the seven thunders talked, I was about to
write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying,
‘Seal what the seven thunders talked; and do not
6 write them.’ And the angel, whom I saw standing
on the sea and on the earth, raised his right hand
7 into heaven, and swore by him who lives for the
ages of ages, who created the heaven and the things
in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea
and the things in it, that there will no longer be
8 time, but in the days of the sound of the seventh
angel, whenever he be about to sound the trumpet;
and the mystery of God was completed as he made
9 his servants the prophets bearers of glad tidings.
And the voice—which I heard from heaven, again,
talking with me and saying, ‘Go: take the scroll
open in the hand of the angel standing on the sea and
on the earth.’ And I went off to the angel, telling

him to give me the little scroll. And he says to me,
'Take and eat it up: and it will embitter thy belly,
10 but in thy mouth will be sweet as if honey.' And I
took the little scroll out of the hand of the angel, and
ate it up; and there was in my mouth as if sweet
honey; and when I ate it, my belly was embittered.
11 And they say to me, 'Thou must again prophecy
about peoples and nations and tongues and kings—
many.'

THE MESSAGE OF THE STRONG ANGEL.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

1.—CLOTHED IN A CLOUD: not in a mist or fog; the cloud may be anything from fleecy cirrus to dark nimbus. But the English *clothe*, to cover with *cloth*, is an imperfect translation of the Greek word, which means to *throw around*, without bringing in positively the idea of *clothes*. *With a cloud thrown around him* would be a literal translation, and good enough if we bear in mind that the metaphor is drawn from clothing and robing.

THE BOW: mentioned here and in iv. 3 only—an emerald-green 'rainbow.'

A LITTLE SCROLL. Whether St. John coins this word (found here only) or not, it is a very small diminutive of a *scroll*, itself a diminutive of a *roll* or *book*. It might mean a mere ticket or warrant, about as much as the small bits of bread ordinarily given at the Lord's Supper, and with some similar meaning.

2.—ON THE SEA. St. John, and the other evangelists, used this expression only of our Lord walking *on the sea* (John vi. 19), except in John xxi. 1; but Matthew (xxi. 19) says our Lord saw a fig-tree *on the road*, or path; and Luke makes our Lord say (xxii. 30) that His disciples will eat and drink 'upon My table.' So the word *on* need

not mean more than when we use it of a town *on* the sea.

7.—BUT, or *other than* : qualified by the ‘whenever,’ etc., following, so as to show that the time spoken of is over at the beginning of the sounding, and does not extend through it.

AND the mystery. This *and* seems to be used like the second *and* in vi. 1 ; xii. 1, etc. Apparently the angel speaks of the thing as if it were already done.

THE MYSTERY : thus entirely unfolded and make known. The words *complete* and *fulfil* ought to mean the same ; but I use the Latin form, *complete*, because the Anglo-Saxon form, *fulfil*, has become too inextricably associated with the *fulfilment* of prophecies of future events.

AS. St. John (and others) use *according as* (i. 23, John Baptist speaking ; xii. 50, Jesus speaking ; so Mark xiv. 21) in such cases ; *as* is so used habitually in Greek for *in manner as*. This might be paraphrased *as, or like as, the glad tidings which He gave His prophets to bring, and which they brought, in old time*.

9.—*Embitter* : the same word translated *make harsh* in viii. 11. Here there is no danger of misconception, for the metaphor is too vague to follow the figure literally. It may mean *irritate*.

11.—*Many* : may well apply to all the preceding nouns ; but the grammar admits of its being applied to *kings* only.

Expository Notes.

1.—St. John then saw another *strong angel*, like that herald angel of ch. v. 2, who called so as to be heard in heaven, earth, and below the earth, for someone to open the scroll, and break its seals ; and also like the herald of the fall of Babylon (ch. xviii. 21), who cast a large stone into the sea. Like the Lamb who broke the seals, and the angels who blew the trumpets, and the angels

who poured the saucers, his place seems to be heaven, where John was; and his office is to give the time for the occurrence of some events on earth. The events he heralds are of surpassing importance, as compared with those represented by the trumpets. Like the Lamb, elders, and animals, he is symbolical, and may well represent the Spirit of God. It may be here noticed that, as in the earliest times, so in the latest, the distinction between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit becomes less accentuated; so that while kept distinct as persons, they become almost undistinguishable *to us* in the work which they do.

The singularity of this angel's proceeding, which distinguishes him from the Lamb, trumpets, etc., is that he descends to earth, and there delivers his signal. He is clothed in cloud; and what this means in Scripture we may perhaps gather from the expressions, 'coming in a cloud' (Exod. xix. 9), 'covered with a cloud' (Exod. xxiv. 15), 'clouds and darkness are round about him'—almost the same idea as clothed or wrapt in clouds, here—(Ps. xvii. 2), and others, which always mean that the cloud entirely conceals something from those on the earth. St. John sees the angel and his divine characteristics; but there is no indication that this angel represents anything visible upon earth. Like the Almighty upon His throne in heaven (v. 1), this angel has a little scroll, not sealed, however, but open, in his hand; he takes his stand on the sea and earth, so as to include both, as places to which his message is about to be delivered, the sea, the parts of the world outside the old empire, being especially selected by his right foot. The key to the imagery is a thunderstorm, with such associations as we find in Ps. lxxviii. 33, or Ps. xxix. God is present, concealed by clouds on which He rides, and makes His presence known by the sensible utterance of His voice, and lightnings. The clouds seem subordinate to the symbol-

ism, and may not be pressed to represent more than the cover of physical and spiritual order under which God chooses to work unseen.

4.—These seven thunders indicate the complete address, audible to all on earth, of a personal voice of God. No one can say that God is absent from the conscience of each; and none can say that God is absent from the customs and thoughts which bind nations together, and which give them action. No one can suppose God to be the living God, who created and upholds the physical and intellectual movement of the world, and yet suppose Him to be absent from the overruling movement of conscience—the most divine of all existences. That such a supreme power exists, and is directly exercised, is illustrated in the Old Testament; clearly typified as regards God's own people; decidedly exhibited in the personal cases of Pharaoh, Balaam, Nebuchadnezzar, and Cyrus.

This continuation of the sixth trumpet is analogous in position to the sealing of one hundred and forty-four thousands on earth in anticipation of the four winds, in the sixth seal; and its subject may likewise be some wonderful action of God's Spirit in the believing Church on earth. There may well be an analogy with the giving of the Law from Sinai. On that occasion there were, presumably, ten voices of thunder, and the substance of their voices was given to Moses, written on stone tablets. Again, as the seals indicate the determining foreknowledge and fixed engagement of God, and the trumpets are notes of war, so the thunders indicate a publication of God's law, or a proclamation of His voice. Whether they be a series, like the seven seals, trumpets, etc., or whether all be heard by the prophet at once, their action would extend, more or less, throughout the age. In the former case, which seems most likely, since the prophet would hardly distinguish seven thunders all sounding at

once, four of them may influence the whole age, and three prevail during the latter part of it. It may well be that a reference might occur to the Reformation which, up to our day, is most associated with Luther and his contemporaries.

6.—Then follows the oath of the strong angel. Its solemnity and depth are very impressive in the mouth of the angel representing that Spirit who, at the very beginning of the world, before heaven was separated from earth, was moving on the face of the chaos (Gen. i. 2), and who was one of the divine council which determined the formation of primæval man (Gen. i. 26).

The angel now adds to the sworn promises of God, which God had made to His servants the prophets—to Adam, Abraham, and others, and now makes at last to St. John; to these he adds the one thing they all lacked—an engagement as to the time. There is to be no longer time, or interval. The mystery of God, the plan on which He had based His promises so long before, was one to be completed in the days of the seventh trumpet-angel, whenever he should be at the point of sounding.

8.—The construction of the eighth verse is mixed, but it is usually taken to mean that St. John now hears a voice speaking to him—the voice, viz., which he had before heard speaking to him from heaven—and some have taken it to be the voice from the horns of the gold altar in front of God (ix. 13), although that had never spoken to him, but to the sixth angel. It is, no doubt, the voice from heaven (x. 4) just before mentioned.

The only parallel to this eating of the little scroll is (Ezek. iii. 3) where Ezekiel has an open label, or descriptive heading, of a scroll (LXX.) given him by a hand, open, and he is commanded by a figure, enthroned above the firmament, and having all the symbols of divinity, to eat the heading, and to cause his belly to eat it. That little scroll was as honey for sweetness in

Ezekiel's mouth; it is not said that it had any further effect. It was written within and without with lamentations and mourning and woe, and was to be spoken to the house of Israel. Ezekiel was then conducted to the place where he was to speak; and he went, in a start or impetus (violent onset) of spirit. If, as we will suppose, the parallel hold good, St. John was to take the open little scroll, and so assimilate and digest its contents that he should utter them, as he accordingly does in the course of the succeeding prophecy. The contents of the little scroll are lamentations and mourning and woe. In the mouth they are to the speaker sweet—just in punishment and redress; reasonable, wise, and successful; faithful, merciful, and secure. In the belly they are digested; and the further effect of the contents is that which they have on the readers of St. John's prophecy; but perhaps that which they have on the prophet's tone, or heart, towards those against whom he prophesies. A heart is said to be *hardened* when its courage and purpose are maintained in opposition to threats or conscience; and it may be said to be *embittered* when its sense of justice and faithfulness is maintained in spite of sorrow and pity. Be that as it may, we may safely gather that St. John has now another series of prophecies to make, which do not partake of the nature of chastisement or discipline, but rather of punishment and deprivation.

CHAPTER XI.

ORIGINAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

- 1 AND a reed like a rod was given me, saying, Rise
and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and
2 the worshippers in it: and the court outside the
temple throw out, outside, and do not measure it;
because it was given to the nations (Gentiles), and
3 they will tread the holy city forty-two months. And
I shall give to my two witnesses, and they will
prophesy twelve hundred and sixty days clothed in
4 coarse cloth. These are the two olive-trees and the
two lampstands, standing in front of the Lord of
5 the earth: and if anyone wishes to hurt them, fire
passes forth out of their mouth and eats up their
enemies; and if anyone should wish to hurt them,
6 he must be killed so. These have authority to shut
heaven, that no rain fall during the days of their
prophecy; and they have authority over the waters,
to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with
7 every stroke as often as even they wish. And when-
ever they shall have finished their testimony, the
beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will
make war with them, and conquer them, and kill
them.
- 8 And their corpse is on the street of the great city;
that which is called spiritually Sodom and Egypt,
where also their Lord was crucified.

9 And out of the peoples, tribes, tongues and nations they are looking upon their corpse three and a half days, and will not give up their corpses to be put
10 into a tomb. And the dwellers on the earth rejoice over them, and are glad, and will send one another gifts; because those two prophets tortured the
11 dwellers on the earth. And after the three and a half days, a spirit of life out of God entered into them; and they stood upon their feet; and a great fear fell
12 upon those who were observing them. And they heard a great voice from heaven, saying to them, 'Ascend hither.' And they ascended into heaven in
13 the clouds; and their enemies observed them. And in that hour a great earthquake occurred; and the tenth part of the city fell; and seven thousands, names of men, were killed in the earthquake; and the rest became frightened, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

14 The second woe is gone. See! the third woe is coming quickly.

15 And the seventh angel sounded: and there occurred loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom of the world is become our Lord's and his Christ's; and he will reign for the ages of ages.'

16 And the twenty-four elders, seated upon their thrones before God, fell upon their faces, and salaamed to God, saying, 'We thank thee, O Lord, the almighty God, the being, and the was, because thou hast taken thy great power, and reignedst.

18 And the nations were angry; and thine anger came, and the due time of the dead to be judged; and to give the pay to thy servants, the prophets, and the saints, and those who fear thy name—the small and the great—and to destroy those who are destroying the earth.'

19 And the temple of God in heaven was opened;

and the chest of his covenant in the temple was seen ; and there occurred lightnings, voices, thunders, earthquake, and hail great.

THE MISSION OF THE TWO WITNESSES.

SECTION I. VERSES I TO 14. THE SECOND WOE.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

1.—REED, just as in English ; but the reeds varied from the size used for a pen to that used for a javelin, or spear-shaft. The *reed*, or rod, used for measuring land was ten feet ; very nearly our own length of ten feet.

ROD ; that is, lighter than the stout *staff*, or *cudgel*, used for walking and defence, or for cattle-driving.

2.—TREAD, just as in English ; to *walk* a road or place frequently, to *tread* grapes, or for simply *walk on* or *in*.

3.—WITNESSES OF ME, may in Greek, as in English, mean either *my witnesses*, or *witnesses of*, or *about, me*. In ii. 13, where the majority of the oldest MSS. read ‘ my faithful witness of me ’ (*of me* occurring twice), it seems to be used in each sense. In Acts iii. 15 St. Luke could hardly have meant *whose witnesses we are*. In Acts xxii. 20 St. Paul might mean that St. Stephen was either Christ’s witness, or a witness of, or about, Christ. Of this, at least, we may be sure, that St. John would mean by *my witness* the same (m. m.) as St. Paul means in the words given by St. Luke, by *thy witness*—whether a *witness put forward by*, or a *witness about*, me or thee.

7—THE BEAST THAT ASCENDS, etc. This description of the beast is merely to distinguish him, without any reference to the time when he ascended, or would ascend ; it gives the place he came from, or would have come from, to take his part in the action. St. John uses a similar construction in John iv. 36.

8.—CORPSE. In Greek the word is applicable to one or more fallen men or things—much like our *ruin*, which scientifically may be a closer translation.

SPIRITUALLY: only used here and in 1 Cor. ii. 14. It, at all events, means *not literally*, and it would imply a closer relation to actual reality than the word *metaphorically*. Perhaps an instance of spiritual speaking is St. Paul's, in 1 Cor. iii. 6: 'I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.' *Allegorically* is another Greek word, Anglicized in Gal. iv. 24; but its meaning implies (as with *metaphor*) something *other* than the simple meaning; whereas *spiritually* means something *spiritual*, other than the simple meaning.

9.—GIVE UP: literally, *let go*, as an arrow from the bow, or the spirit from a dying man, or a ship from her moorings, or a culprit let off without trial. It is the word so frequently translated *forgive*.

10.—TORTURED: originally *to rub* (gold) *upon the touchstone*; and so applied to scientific investigation, and then to the torturing and racking of persons for evidence, or, metaphorically, to distress of persons by illness (Matt. viii. 6), or of a ship by a storm (Matt. xiv. 24).

12.—THE CLOUDS. The Greeks used the definite article before *heaven*, *earth*, where we do not; and, as we do, before *sea*; and before *cloud*, as we do before *clouds*. Thus St. Luke (xii. 54) says, 'Whenever you see *the cloud rising* . . .'; where we should say 'the clouds.'

13.—HOUR. The Greeks used, to express our *hour*, a word which originally, and quite usually, means *season*, especially the seasons of the year—*i.e.*, a *selected*, or *regular*, or *appointed time*.

Expository Notes.

1.—St. John was left in his dream, after he had personally entered into the vision of earth and sea, whither he had gone at the command of the voice from heaven,

and had taken and eaten the little open scroll from the hand of the strong angel there. He finds that a rod had been given him, and he is told (again he does not say by whom; compare vi. 11; viii. 2) to measure. So here is St. John, in his dream, standing where he himself becomes a symbolic part of his own vision. As the rider in the first seal was armed, and rode, conquering and to conquer, and yet nothing appeared for him to conquer, and he was never seen to conquer anyone, so here St. John stands with a measuring reed, and with orders to measure the (covered part of the) temple, the altar, and the worshippers; yet none appear to be measured, and he never measures any. St. John goes on to record a prophecy, perhaps from the book he has eaten; but it seems to begin as the undescribed voice speaking to him in the future tense, as far as xi. 7; then it fades into the historic present, with an occasional future, as if the prophet were becoming himself the composer and the utterer of the prophecy. Lastly, at the 11th verse, it drops completely into the ordinary style in which St. John is accustomed to describe what he sees shown him in a vision; and so continues to the end.

It will be well here to reconsider the general character of the seals and trumpets, in order to judge the better of the fitness of further interpretation. The first six seals showed the conditions—for we must drop the word ‘organization’ here, where all the organization is the Creator’s, and no choice of man’s—under which the highest evolution, or development, of mankind must be controlled, owing to the physical laws of his existence during the age. Within man’s physical nature, as here shown, we must include intellect and consciousness; and, indeed, the intellect and consciousness involved in the incessant movement of each smallest particle of matter and of animals far exceeds our conceptions. We must also include, as a necessary characteristic of man, a

higher kind of consciousness—conscious free will and conviction. Matter affects this consciousness; but this consciousness is not matter, nor subject to material law. Hence at three points the seals indicate contact with higher laws than their own. The first seal shows the natural effect on mankind of the action on matter by the Spirit of God to produce convictions, and this effect, acknowledged by the animals representing the material universe, ranks first. The symbol of God's Spirit, shown in the first seal, seems confined to the proper effect on the consciences and behaviour of mankind, of God's action in the laws of nature (Acts xiv. 17; Rom. i. 20). To the empire, if we may so say, of natural laws the rest of the four first seals are confined, and each is acknowledged by an heraldic call of an animal. These second, third, and fourth seals seem to affect man, as they would if he were merely a very highly developed animal; and it is of great significance that we have, preceding them, the first seal to show that the material environment of man pierces his nature more deeply than it would affect a mere animal, and produces convictions which overcome all his mere animal instincts, and are of a kind to bring him complete supremacy over them.

The rider in the first seal does not make war with the sword of his mouth (as ii. 16): he touches the higher conscience of man's super-material nature by means of the natural laws which God has appointed for the creation and the continuance of the universe. But man is taught also by the Word of God. There is a revelation of God made to man both directly to his spirit and indirectly through his senses. This fact is touched by the fifth seal: the continued existence of souls of men after death, their prayer for vengeance, and the instruction to them to continue waiting. It shows the continual existence and protection of those who, during the age of the seals, have been slain for the Word of God. Its scene is

in heaven, and it carries its own proof of non-interference with the rest of the vision.

The third point, in which the vision comes in contact with super-material things, we have called an episode ; it occurs within the sixth seal. That seal shows the instability and ruin attached to earthly aims and careers ; then, *after that*, distinct from it, comes an episode showing the acknowledgement, and salvation, and adoption into some divine corporation—we might perhaps say, metaphorically, sonship—of a hundred and forty-four thousand servants of our God upon earth. There immediately follows (vii. 9, etc.) an exhibition of the intense interest displayed in heaven with regard to these hundred and forty-four thousands sealed ; and (verse 14, etc.), in a further appendix, an angel declares the ultimate complete salvation and reward of all who shall have ‘washed their robes and made them bright in the blood of the Lamb.’

We see, then, that up to the close of the sixth seal we pass through an era during which all that is noticeable to the inhabitants of the earth who are not servants of God, besides the physical conditions of their existence and intelligence, is the conduct of the sealed. The first six trumpets are also, from their nature, secular ; and the probability is suggested whether both seals and trumpets do not carry us through some era especially secular in its character, during which spiritual life and action exist in a state of distress, and both end together at the close of a dispensation which may perhaps be meant by ‘the times of the Gentiles’ (Luke xxi. 24). The seventh trumpet ushers in the time when ‘The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord’ ; and the silence of the seventh seal indicates a change incompatible with the seals, since it cannot be represented in a vision confined, as regards the world, to physical effects and action. Such a change can be represented in the trumpets, which deal not only with the physical

actions of men, but (ix. 20) have reference to the spirit which animates men, with the feeling which results from their actions, and with policy, learning, temper, manners, and religion.

The seventh trumpet is to bring in a time of God's reign, and His execution of justice. The wicked will be no longer allowed to grow on until their wickedness on earth brings its own punishment under natural law. Almighty God will take His great power, and reign; and the due time will have arrived for destroying those who are destroying the earth (xi. 18, 19). But before the vision of the trumpets turns from what we may call a Gentile, or worldly, series of actions to one in which Christ and His Church will become pre-eminent and acknowledged, the little scroll is introduced, with as strong indications of the importance of its contents, and of the events related to it, as accompanied the giving of the law and covenant from Mount Sinai. As the sealed scroll seemed to contain God's covenant or intentions towards the human race in heaven, after the dispensation of the seals is ended, perhaps the little scroll contains, in an open and public form, his intentions towards the wicked on earth—towards those who will never have admittance to heaven. This primitive time begins before the final judgment (xx. 1), and presumably continues through the time of the seventh seal and seventh trumpet, and through the Millennium. The vision shows no immediate effect resulting from the eating of the book; but it proceeds at once to give a vision showing, much more fully than before, in vii. 2-9, the condition of the saints on earth during the six trumpets just sounded. After the vision of the seventh trumpet come a succession of historical visions, more in the style of Daniel's, showing (as in his case) successively different aspects of the religious and secular world, in which the spiritual history is the predominant object.

The forty-two months begin at the treading of the Holy City. St. John in his vision seems to himself to be standing, at the call of the angel, and he has eaten the book; and the time seems in the vision to be that of giving the outside Court to the nations. The tense *was given* seems to suit that time best: it is the same as that with which we are familiar in Greek epistles, *e.g.*, in St. Paul's (Gal. vi. 11), 'See in how large letters *I wrote* with my own hand,' etc., being the very first words of the paragraph so written by St. Paul with his own hand. It seems that first in Constantine's time, about A.D. 300, the Court was given to the nations, and Christianity and Christian worship became the accepted religion of all the nations. When that had occurred, a possibility was open for the witnesses to prophesy, etc., in the Temple Court, and to be recognised as the authorized witnesses of Christ to the nations. This date of beginning would bring the end of the treading the Holy City to A.D. 1560—Queen Elizabeth's reign. It was then that the national authorities first ceased to claim and exercise complete human control over the religious beliefs and worship of the nations; and religious freedom was first allowed by the rulers of various foreign and British States, and the right of States to control religious belief was conspicuously challenged amongst the nations.

3.—Our Lord (Matt. xxiv. 14) says, 'This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world' (not simply in the earth) 'for evidence' (the noun formed from the same word as *witness* in St. John's vision) 'to all the nations; and then the end will come.' In this passage the Gospel, its preaching, and the preachers, constitute the *witness*. But our Lord speaks of the whole world—the *whole inhabited earth*—which can hardly be symbolized in St. John's time by the Court of the Temple, open to the nations, nor by the Holy City, in which St. John's two witnesses prophesied. These do not include

the whole world, nor can they include the great city Sodom. Our Lord's *preachers*, too, seem different from these witnesses: they have an assigned office—to preach—which the witnesses had not; they travel, the witnesses *stand*; their field is the world, that of the witnesses Christendom. The witnesses stood in front of the Lord of the whole earth (verse 4), *i.e.*, were acknowledged as authorized religious teachers by Christendom, until they were killed. On the whole, the *witnesses* seem to be corporate bodies, acknowledged, at least nominally, by the whole of Christendom to be divinely authorized religious bodies, as much as all Jews in Zechariah's time acknowledged, in profession at least, their own established religion, and its authorized administrators. Such corporate bodies were the churches above named, *i.e.*, the Eastern and Western Churches, pure, corrupt, or reformed. They are conspicuous enough to be seen, and are (and have been) accessible to be seen by anyone who seeks to see or hear them. Their profession while witnesses must at least be such that anyone candidly observing them must be aware that they bear witness to the reality, the actions, and the teaching of Christ; for we cannot separate Christ from what Christ came to do and to teach, in the evidence of what the voice from heaven calls 'my two witnesses.' At the same time, they *might* have been as bad as any of the seven churches whose lamps and angels were in God's presence (ii. 3), persecuting and impoverishing the true servants of God, leaving their first love, full of men who seized hold of the teaching of the seer Balaam, or of the Nicolaitans, harbouring a Jezebel with the rank of a prophetess, adopting idol worship and fornication, dead or sleepy, leaving their work to die uncompleted before God, lukewarm, self-righteous. Such faults in a church would, if persevered in, result in the lampstand being taken away. In the case of these two witnesses, their fate is, not to have their character as lampstands and

olive-trees removed by God, but to have their lives taken away by the scarlet beast—that of xvii. 3, 8—which came, or was to come, out of the bottomless pit, to be the support of the harlot; their *death* is therefore something which a secular persecuting power, as such, could effect, and no more.

But before they are killed, these two witnesses will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in coarse cloth, such as was worn—voluntarily, of course—by anyone wishing to express deep, almost despairing, grief, sorrow over ruin or bereavement, sense of guilt and contrition, and so forth. It will be well to consider the meaning of these measures of time.

The nations will tread the Holy City forty-two months, and the witnesses will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, and lie dead three and a half days. The only meaning historically probable is found by considering each day to represent an astronomical year. This at once suggests a search to learn whether this is agreeable to the language used. The week, approximately a quarter of a lunar month, consisted of as many days as there were known planets, and these days were by the wise men of Assyria and Chaldea named after the planetary deities. This gave the number seven a sacredness or completeness, in the learned as well as in the religious world, which resulted in its frequently being adopted for any marked or significant purpose, both in civil contracts and in religious appointments. Especially the idea of seven making a complete and convenient cycle was extended to time. Not to dwell upon Jacob's bowing before Esau seven times (Gen. xxxiii. 3), and a host of similar cases occurring under Moses, Elijah, Elisha, up to St. John's time, we find a week of years in use in Syria as early as Jacob's time, and that it was adopted into the Mosaic law as a limit to contracts and servitude. The Great Jubilee was ordered to come after a week of weeks

of years, every fiftieth year inclusive ; so that in dealing with servitude, or occupation of territory, or, in short, with the prophetic outlook of whole nations, the week of years, and the use of a day as a year, came almost naturally to an Israelitish prophet. Indeed, God's original week (Gen. ii. 3), from which the week of seven days was adopted in Syria, at least, as early as the time of Laban (Gen. xxix. 27)—this original week was one of much longer eras than even a year.

The year of the Israelites certainly went by the moon, so far as the festivals were concerned ; but a *month* was always thirty days, not twenty-nine and a half, and, consequently, a rectification by the omission of some six days a year would be necessary to bring the great feasts into harmony with the moon. That harmony established, it would follow that the year would be three hundred and fifty-four days, about eleven and a quarter days too short, and would require an addition of a month of twenty-nine and a half days ; but nominally thirty until correction, to be made at intervals of two or three years. We do not know how these adjustments were made, but that they were made, and under some guidance from the Eastern astronomers, is certain. As those astronomers seem to have known the length of the year better than we do, we may feel sure that Daniel or St. John had as definite an idea of what one thousand two hundred and sixty years—true astronomical years—would mean as we have. The week was always seven days ; the month was always thirty days ; the year was always three hundred and sixty days ; but the month was always so adjusted that Abib commenced with the first appearance of the new moon ; and the year was so adjusted that the lunar festivals never got astray from the seedtime, first-fruits, and harvest. Thus confusion would have to be neutralized by custom. From the 1st Nizan one year to the 1st Nizan next year would be a 'year,' whether it were of twelve or thirteen

months, and whatever days had been added, subtracted, or interpolated (that is, added without being appropriated by any year or month). Custom would ordinarily make it plain to what 'year' a speaker or writer alluded when he used the term; but a really educated man, like Daniel, would no doubt use different terms (as *year*, *time*, etc.), each with its mathematically definable meaning, unknown to us.

3.—Meanwhile the witnesses begin their prophesying. They represent the truths taught, by word and act, by churches, under the tread of the nations, and liable to all such errors, as churches acknowledged by God—as the seven churches were—have been described by St. John as committing. The actual scene of action of these witnessing churches seems to be undefined, and all reference to the Court and to the Holy City ceases. If they begin at the close of the forty-two months, the close of their prophesying will be about A.D. 2820. Their attitude and teaching is to have a special character of grief and contrition—as all the reformed churches may be admitted to have, taking their tone, as they still do, from the self-interested teaching of the Dark Ages, rather than from that of the Bible; hardly deeming the old Israelitish liturgical thanksgiving (Ps. c.) to be Christian enough for public use, without a doxology, and timid to go the length of the Apostle Peter (1 Pet. i. 1-12) without more safeguards and qualifications than he has inserted. But so far as can be judged, the prophesying of the witnesses may better have begun at, or close upon, the giving of the Court to the nations; for never have the truths of the glad tidings been more shrouded in a denser sackcloth of penance, purgatory, abject prostration, and self-torture, than during the time we have assigned to the occupation of the Court by the nations. This dense sackcloth has now been so nearly removed by the reformed churches, that it is impossible to suppose it to

be represented in the vision as distinguishing the reformed from the earlier Greek and Roman churches. It seems likely, then, that about the time of Queen Elizabeth the one thousand two hundred and sixty days ended, and the two witnesses—say the Greek and Roman Churches—were made war upon by the secular powers of Christendom, robbed of all the supremacy that had been given them by those powers, and as secular powers extinguished. As was noticed before, the secular powers could not take from the churches more than they gave. Again, killing a church is quite another thing to killing members of a church; and the two are never confounded together in prophecy.

5.—The symbolic word *Enemies* identifies the hostile feeling and power of the enemies with the persons exercising that hostility. *Killing* by word of mouth means destroying all vitality in any such disposition and action for the future. For instance, in 1555 a Lord Chancellor of England could officially examine a respected and much loved prebendary of St. Paul's as to the Blessed Sacrament; and when John Bradford said that Christ was present to the believer by faith, but there was no change in the bread, could hand him over to the Sheriff, who, as a duty, burnt him alive at Smithfield before an enormous crowd (Fox's 'Acts and Monuments'), who, as Fuller says, saw that 'he endured the flame as a fresh gale of wind on a hot summer day.' Such an act of hostility to a witness of God's truth has been rendered impossible; or, in figurative language, such enemies have been slain by the teaching and word of such witnesses—by the *fire* proceeding out of their mouth (verse 5).

So far, then, the vision shows the Temple, or shrine, with its worshippers, who are the true Church, or body of Christ, at any time, whom Christ has 'made priests unto His God and Father' (i. 6); who are amongst those

symbolized by the hundred and forty-four thousands sealed. These individually witness for God by their lives and teaching, but are no corporate organization on earth. They include all those known only to God, who are received into His presence, accepted as His true servants, and who are His priests, not by human appointment, but by the inward consecration of God Himself, to whom they have authorized access. That is one part of the scene.

Besides the shrine, the vision shows the Court, including all nominally, or by profession, Christians in the world; both those who also have access to the shrine and those who have not; open also in St. Paul's time, at least under military pressure, to the uncircumcised outer world. This Court, at all events, is thrown entirely open—given up (verse 2) to the nations who like to come in. This coming in would, presumably, represent a use of Christian public worship, and a profession of Christianity—it can hardly represent anything less than a profession of nominal Christianity. It is thrown open, so that such as have free access to it will tread—it may mean, offensively, *trample on* (like *treading grapes*), or it may mean, indifferently, *frequenting*—they will tread the Holy City forty-two months. No distinction is made in the description of this Court of any Jewish or Gentile part; it is all the Court outside the shrine. The nations will now be to the worship of God what the Jewish nation and others who had admission to any Court used to be to the Mosaic worship of God. Amongst these God gives two witnesses. As He showed Zechariah, in the symbol of a seven-branched lampstand fed by two olive-trees, right and left, so here two witnesses stand for the equivalent symbol of two lampstands, and of the two olive-trees which feed them. The absence from the vision of any lampstands, olive-trees, or stars, is remarkable, and indicates that no anointed, nor author-

ized officers, neither priest, king, nor church system, would be God's medium for supplying these churches with light. The witnesses each represent both lampstand and olive-tree.

Now, we must not look amongst private sects to find the two churches which are analogous to Zechariah's single lampstand, shown him at a time when there were already sects, and differences of doctrine and of religious observance, amongst the Jews; we must look amongst professedly Christian churches set up, and acknowledged, amongst the professedly Christian nations—such as in the Middle Ages, the Greek and Latin, Trinitarian and Arian, and in modern times, Calvinist, Lutheran, reformed English and Irish, and Presbyterian—sometimes two, and generally more. Each of these has been a national church, and, however disunited at times by schism, each has been a visible witness before the world of nations. We notice that the witnesses represent something not merely material: *will* is ascribed to them (verse 6), as well as authority and prophecy, in a way which does not admit of their representing the Old and New Testaments, or Covenants.

7.—The closest parallel to this symbolic killing of the witnessing churches seems to be the slaying of one of the heads of the beast from the sea (xiii. 3); but we must not omit to notice a stronger resemblance to *that* death, and recovery to a new life, which is so prominent a doctrine throughout the Gospel history (John i. 13 to 2 Tim. ii. 11), viz., the death experienced by each servant of God, and the new life which has been given him. This death is symbolized in this vision for all His followers, by the Lamb as if slain (v. 6). In the case of the old empire, the death and revival of the head represented a complete change in the empire—in its accepted ideas of religion, of government, and of personal rights—so that we must expect some similar change in the witnesses.

We must expect that their evidence for Christian truth will be put on a new basis; that it will not be founded, as a visible and audible testimony before men, upon its former foundations, nor delivered by officers claiming and exercising in the church the same powers as before; that the responsible standing assigned to each individual will be quite changed. Some such change took place during the Reformation of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; but it is difficult to find a satisfactory interpretation of the details of the prophecy, especially as respects the three and a half days or years. It requires to be ascertained when the established churches breathed out the last gasp of the spirit of their earthly life as witnesses, and when they ceased to be anything, in the opinion of Christendom, but the mere corpses of witnesses. Possibly actual public suppression of the Bible, and official slaying of those who witnessed to its truths, would be quite enough test of the death of a church as a witness of the Bible; and the recognition by any State, or even by a considerable number of its influential citizens, of a resurrection of the witness as a reformed church, in the true spirit of a witness for God's Gospel, would be such a revival as is symbolized by the witnesses standing on their feet; and the acceptance and support of their teaching on Gospel lines by any States of Christendom, is all the ascent into earth's heaven—into the position of guides recognised and empowered by the constituted authorities, which *could* be assigned in the vision to a true witness.

8.—From verse 8, those peoples, tribes, etc., associated with the Roman system of civilization and religion, seem to be taken as representing Christendom; the Greek Church does not seem to be identified with it, or even distinctively alluded to. But the three and a half years between the time of the old churches dying as witnesses and new churches being revived as witnesses seems not

yet ascertainable; nor does the dropping out of the Greek or any other church from its character as witness synchronize with any similar fall of the Papal Church. A tenth part of the city falling would mean a great fall in the bulwarks and protective resource surrounding those who administered the States of Christendom: and the earthquake a great upheaval of the basis of power and government.

All this has occurred. If we compare the position of Henry VIII. and his contemporary fellow-sovereigns with their present successors, we find the bureaucratic despotism, which enabled such monarchs to override laws and to murder a prince or province by merely signing (or at least sanctioning) an official document, is completely gone, or passed into the hands of the politicians who may secure a majority of votes, artificially created and manipulated according to their own current arrangements of law and influence. The seat of the Beast, the great city, is indeed at best protected by the ruined remains of her former bulwarks—here lying in open breaches, there converted and restored in a way almost past recognition. In the vision this change seems connected with the religious revival as its true commencement; and perhaps no other satisfactory origin has ever yet been assigned to this great and unprecedented change in the constitutions of States.

The killing of seven thousands, names of men, in the earthquake deserves notice. As before, seven is a complete or sacred number; a thousand is the largest division in Israel next to a tribe, and is used in the plural, as we use it to mean large numbers. Seven thousands is the number given by God to Elijah (1 Kings xix. 18—LXX) as the number of Israelites who had not bowed to Baal. *Names* is used of men to represent actual men, enumerated for a good or beneficial distinction (iii. 4; Acts i. 15; and similar to the old Hebrew Num. xxvi. 53). These

seven thousands might represent the martyrs slain during the earthquake which shook, and at last upset, the Popish Church from its supreme secular power.

14.—St. John's warning, immediately after the conclusion of the episode of the witnesses, seems to put them into the second woe. But it may well be supposed that the episode is set in its most suitable place, as an interruption of the second woe, so that the narrative of the woes runs on consecutively, omitting the episode from ix. 21 to xi. 13. For the episode is on a subject which, though in harmony with woe, is not war nor woe. What disturbances it describes are internal; and it is therefore not a part—the termination, for instance—of the second woe. Nor is it synchronous with it, for it is not apparent how the Mahommedan conquests, the throwing open of the Court to the nations, and the two witnesses, can all have begun and should all end together.

NOTES ON THIS SECTION.

THE VISION OF THE TWO WITNESSES.

The subject of this vision is one which pervades the whole Bible, viz., the witnesses God has provided to bear testimony to Him upon earth, and their treatment there; and we are not surprised to find the imagery collected from all parts of the Old Testament revelation. It will be well to consider at once what these images represent, according to what seems to be the usual prophetic code.

The measuring of a building with the rod or line ascertains definitely what is included in the building and what is not, and the size of what is included. The Temple (more literally the covered shrine) would especially include the Holy Places. The altar (of sacrifice) was outside it (Matt. xxiii. 35, where the Greek word for *temple* or *sanctuary* is the same as for *temple* here). The altar of incense was inside. In the temple none but consecrated

priests worshipped. But if the term *temple* be used in a more extended sense, to include the court of the Levites and the great altar and sea, it then includes all that part of the Temple and its courts in which any ceremonial worship took place. This last seems to be sometimes a colloquial meaning of this Greek word, *Naös* (Matt. xxvii. 5). The *temple* in which the money-changers sat (Matt. xxi. 12), and our Lord taught (Matt. xxvi. 55; Mark xii. 35; John viii. 20, etc.), is quite another Greek word, *Hieron*, which includes all the consecrated ground and buildings and courts within it. In accordance with St. Paul's words (1 Cor. iii. 17), we may take the *temple* in this vision to represent all true worshippers consecrated by God's grace (Rom. v. 2); for of these the Priests of the Mosaic ritual seem to have been ordained as a type. Every one of them was specially consecrated, and ceremonially holy, and had direct access to God for worship. Whether the *temple* include the Levites' court or not, or the *altar* include the great sacrificial altar or not, is no doubt purposely left as undetermined as any divisions between the courts outside the temple (*naös*). In St. John's day, neither as a fact nor as a figure, did veil, sacrificial altar, or separation of men from women, Jew from Gentile, exist in the church on earth. St. John's temple and altar and worshippers can hardly represent other than what actually existed in his day—the true worshippers, who worship God without any intervening veil, and really and spiritually offer to Him their praise, prayers, and vows. No doubt, too, the vision was enough for this purpose, and showed no needless copy of Herod's temple, of which not a stone remained in its place; nor of Mosaic machinery for conducting ceremonies, not one of which had God's sanction for its continuance, and which were done away by the facts which for so long they had foreshadowed.

The Courts will, then, represent the visible church—all

who profess Christianity, and who join in the authorized manner of worship—all undistinguished, like the parts of the temple as above, and named collectively *the Court*. It would include all, from true worshippers and seekers after God to thieves (Matt. xxi. 13)—all who professed, or were generally accepted, to be Christians. But the Court is to be quite left out of the measurement, and to be subject to the power, policy, and teaching of the world outside, in common with the Holy City itself, in which, while on earth, the true as well as professing worshippers dwell. To this Holy City two witnesses are given, who *are* (*i.e.*, represent figuratively) the two olive-trees and the two lampstands, which figuratively light the visible, as the inner lampstand the spiritual, Church. No angels are mentioned, as is the case with the seven churches (i. 20); so that it is the form and fact of a spiritual church, amid a nominally Christian people, which is represented, without any divinely authorized personification or angel, yet with the properties of a true church, sufficient for unbelievers to see, and sufficient to offer light and to bear testimony. The lampstands exhibit certainly the profession, teaching, and moral code; yet there is no clue as to how far these were acted up to. Even the seven churches were not to be wholly relied on. In order to interpret this, we first consider their number. It is the number fixed by the Mosaic law (Deut. xvii. 6; John viii. 17) as necessary and sufficient to give legal evidence—‘true’ evidence—of a fact. If twenty men came to testify to a fact, the affidavit of two would be considered sufficient. Something like twenty men, more or less (Matt. xxvi. 60; Mark xiv. 56), came to witness against Christ at His last trial before the supreme Jewish court; and they only cared to find *two* that would agree, and, those found, would apparently have sent the rest away as useless one way or the other. Just as St. John selects the names of seven local churches to be a perfect

symbolic representation of all, indifferently leaving out Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, etc., as of no use to strengthen the figure, so here he mentions *two* witnesses—never less, but indifferently more.

The scene on which the two witnesses appear is not 'the earth,' but a separate vision of the temple and its court. It is on our earth—in this world—accessible by the beast (xi. 7), and frequented by peoples, tribes, tongues and nations. In fact, the scene is not confined to the Christendom of the old Roman Empire, but includes it. Presumably its *heaven* includes more than that seen over the earth of former visions, whose sun, moon and stars may signify the old earthly dignitaries or notables, and in the clouds of which our Lord is to appear. The description under which the witnesses are introduced, 'These *are* the two olive-trees, etc., is similar to our Lord's 'This *is* my body,' etc. (Matt. xxvi. 26), the same verb being expressed in each case, without various reading in any MS. This figure seems to be similar to Zech. iv. 2, 14, where one sevenfold lampstand is fed by two olive-trees, which are said by an angel to represent 'the two sons of oil' that stand by the Lord of the 'whole earth,' meaning *the two anointed ones*, apparently.

These witnesses shine before men (Matt. v. 16) as two lampstands fed by two olive-trees, with a light continually maintained—as through all the wreck of the Mosaic worship during the later kings—by the grace and strength of God, and continually displayed by the consistent acts or *works* of the witnesses. The strong angel, representing the Divine Spirit, adds that he will give to the witnesses also to *prophecy* (1 Sam. x. 5; xix. 20, etc.), *i.e.*, to exhibit public worship of prayer, praise, and teaching. The exercise of their mission will give them marvellous power, such as to bring on bloodshed in peaceful times and amongst previously peaceful citizens, and to interrupt the course of affairs by *strokes*, of which the meaning

may be gathered from a study of the *strokes* of the seven angels hereafter seen in the vision, and, above all, power to pass a *fire*—a usual symbol of destructive execution by judgment—out of their mouths, which will eat up, as fire does, their enemies. As illustrations of this last power, we need only reflect on the effect of the witness borne to the name of God and Christ first upon the hostile idolatrous world inside the Roman Empire, as it was in St. John's time. In two centuries hostile idolatry and worship entirely disappeared. Again, after the breaking up of the empire, the hostile barbarian world—such as in England nearly exterminated Christianity, and the marks of whose sacrilegious fire we may still see in Lincolnshire upon some of our oldest church buildings—was all swallowed up into the professing church. Again, the fierce and ignorant persecuting world of the time of the Reformation has been eaten up, unless where an exasperated and savage quintessence of it may linger concealed in our nunneries and monasteries.

SECTION II. VERSES 15 TO 19. THE SOUNDING OF THE SEVENTH ANGEL.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

18.—PAY. The Greek word used here (and in Matt. v. 12, 46; xx. 8, etc.) is *wages*: but whether from its use for paying soldiers (a proceeding which soldiers both in those days and since often justly considered to be a great favour), or from its figurative use as a reward, it acquired just that sort of ambiguous sense which attaches to our word *pay*, meaning to satisfy just expectation in a full, or even liberal, manner, and in a good sense, where we oftener use the verb *repay* than *pay*.

18.—THE SMALL AND THE GREAT: is an interjacular reflection, or comment, of St. John. It agrees, in-

deed, with *those destroying* the earth; but probably refers to all, good and bad.

DESTROY: as a city reduced to ruins, and utterly razed. Our word *ruin* is used so much in a partial sense as to be inapplicable. *Demolish the demolishers* is a true translation.

19.—GREAT, as with *many* in x. 11, may well apply to all the preceding nouns, though the grammar admits of its applying to *hail* only. It seems quite in accord with St. John's colloquial or idiomatic style to add an epithet intended to apply to all the nouns, though he takes the gender and number of the adjective so as to agree with the last of them.

Expository Notes.

15.—At the Messiah's coming all the learned and devout men so misunderstood the nature of the kingdom He was to receive on earth, that when He came to His own inheritance His own people did not apprehend or recognise Him (John i. 11). In a parable our Lord gives His own description of the treatment His prophets and He received from the chief priests and religious teachers of His own people (Luke xx. 9-19). *Our* religious guides, too, have failed to picture *how* our Lord and His saints will rule the nations and all this world with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel (Ps. ii. 9; Rev. ii. 27; xii. 5, etc.). We must therefore be particularly careful in approaching this, as yet unapprehended, subject of Christ's reign on earth. It is quite as possible, though not perhaps so likely, that our religious leaders may shrink from the faithful discharge of their duties in that kingdom, as the Jewish leaders of our Saviour's time shrunk from the tender of their allegiance. The latter, even the best of them, were staggered by their preconceived notions of portions of prophecy, and by the similitude they assumed between worldly notions of glory, power, and clemency in an ideal king and *God's* notion.

The seventh trumpet ushers in our Lord's personal earthly kingdom, loudly acknowledged throughout earth's heaven.

The breaking of the seventh seal was followed by silence in the supreme heaven (viii. 1). After the blast of the seventh trumpet the animals are silent, as before; but not so the elders. In the case of the seventh seal no vision appeared to complete the series of seals; and at the blast of the seventh trumpet no vision appears of anything occurring on earth to complete the series of trumpets. Our interest is confined to a consideration of what there could be to cause the elders to praise God here, which was lacking at the breaking of the seventh seal.

The seals indicated man's state, as allowed full play, not under the powers and freedom which prevail in heaven, but under the more guarded laws of nature and intelligence which constitute our life on earth. The trumpets show the most notable circumstances of his behaviour when, in the above state, there is added his probation under such contact with his fellow-men, with the devil and his agents, and with God and His agents, as his allotted environment permitted; until at the completion of the sixth trumpet it is declared (x. 7) that the full time is arrived for God's practical fulfilment of the glad tidings which all His prophets have received from Him. A mystery (x. 7) there is at present awaiting explanation: during all this time an Almighty God permits evil; a righteous God injustice; an omniscient (to use a non-Biblical word, often *unscientifically* used, as if to include a knowledge of what will, and will not, happen) God permits free will. Mystery enough, certainly.

At the beginning of the heavenly visions, before the sealed scroll was noticed, the four animals and twenty-four elders worshipped God as the Creator. Again, when the Lamb appeared and undertook to open the seals, they all worshipped the Lamb as Redeemer. In this case of the seventh trumpet the animals are not mentioned, but the

twenty-four elders worship God as judge, as taking His kingdom (on earth), and as regarding the good, and simply destroying those who destroy. The ruin of the bad by God here spoken of is a retaliation of like for like, a requital in kind, for the previous ruin of the good by the bad, reminding us of Psa. vii. 16: 'His mischief will return upon his own head,' etc., and similar passages; and of the actual case (Isa. xl. 2) of Jerusalem receiving double for all her sins, and of the Divine law of justice given to the Israelites (Exod. xxi. 23, 24). The result would presumably leave the world with the positions of the bad and good at least reversed. The bad will not be as completely exterminated as they had, at times, wished and tried to exterminate the good. That would hardly be justice, and it is inconsistent with the thunders, earthquake, and hail which follow, implying the continued existence of the bad during the dispensation included in the trumpet.

19.—At the blast of the seventh trumpet the temple is opened, the mystery made known, the seat of God's covenant seen. All, however, that St. John can make out are storms, noise, and earthquake, upon earth. He gives no details. Like the rest of the trumpets, this deals especially with human evolution as affecting the living Church on earth, and its living opponents there; as the seals referred to man's *material* environment under God; and the following vision, of the saucers, referred to man's *spiritual* environment. The climax to which the seals tended was extinction, as if the material laws under which we exist in the present world will come to as complete an end as our bodies do in death, before that consummation whose place would be after the opening of the seventh seal; so that such earth as is to exist after that opening will be as entirely new and spiritualized as our re-risen bodies will be. The climax to which the trumpets tend is restitution and judgment, and that to which the saucers tend is the establishment on earth of the reign of Christ and His saints.

CHAPTER XII.

ORIGINAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

- 1 AND a great sign was seen in the heaven : a woman
clothed in the sun, and the moon under her feet, and
2 on her head a crown of twelve stars, and with child,
and cries out, in pangs and tortured to bring forth.
- 3 And another sign in the heaven was seen : and,
see ! a great flame-coloured dragon, having seven
heads and ten horns, and upon its heads seven fillets ;
4 and its tail drags the third part of the stars of heaven,
and threw them into the earth. And the dragon
stands in front of the woman who was about to bring
forth ; that, whenever she should bring forth, it should
5 eat up her child : and she brought forth a male son,
who is about to tend all the nations (armed) with an
iron staff. And her son was caught away to God, and
6 to His [God's] throne : and the woman fled into the
wilderness, where she has there a place made ready,
from God, that they may nourish her there twelve
7 hundred and sixty days. And war came on in the
heaven—Michael and his angels to make war with the
dragon—and the dragon made war, and its angels ; and
8 did not prevail ; nor was a place of theirs found any
9 longer in the heaven ; and it was thrown—the great
dragon, the ancient snake, who is called slanderer
(devil) and adversary (Satan), who leads the whole
inhabited (world) astray—was thrown into the earth ;

10 and its angels were thrown along with it. And I
 heard a great voice in the heaven, saying, ' Now
 came about the salvation, power, and kingdom of our
 God, and the authority of his Christ, because the
 11 accuser of our brothers was thrown, who accuses
 them in the front of our God, day and night. And
 they conquered him because of the blood of the
 Lamb, and because of the word of their (own) testi-
 12 mony ; and did not love their life up to death. On that
 account rejoice, ye heavens, and ye who encamp in
 them. Woe, earth and sea ! because the Slanderer
 descended to you, having great wrath, knowing that
 he has a short season.'

13 And when the dragon saw that it was thrown into
 the earth, it persecuted the woman, she who brought
 14 forth the male. And two wings of the great eagle
 were given to the woman, that she should fly into
 the wilderness, into her place where she is nourished
 there, a season and seasons and half a season from
 15 the face of the snake. And the snake threw out
 of its mouth after the woman water, as if a river,
 16 that it might make her river-borne : and the earth
 helped the woman ; and the earth opened its mouth
 and drank down the river which the dragon threw
 17 out of its mouth. And the dragon was angry at the
 woman, and came away, to make war with the rest of
 her seed, who keep the commands of God, and have
 Jesus' testimony, and stopped upon the sand of the
 sea.

THE WOMAN AND THE DRAGON.

SECTION I. VERSES 1 TO 6. THE WOMAN AND
 HER CHILD.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

I.—A GREAT SIGN. The nearest approach we have in
 English to a verb and noun which will translate the

Greek ones is *signal*. In chapter i. 1, St. John says that this revelation Christ 'signalled, sending by His angel, to His servant John.' Here he says, 'A great signal was seen in the heaven,' viz., one of these signals. In form the verb *signify*, and the noun *sign*, make the most fitting pair; but these have nearly lost the necessary meaning, and would fail to give an English ear the right impression. This *sign* is one of the great *signals* by which Christ is *signalling* the future, throughout this revelation, to St. John.

IN THE HEAVEN: the earthly heaven.

3.—DRAGON. Homer describes a red or purple dragon, apparently founded on a mariner's exaggeration of a boa, or python—a huge serpent with three heads, etc. Perhaps it was the Gothic nations who first invented legs to a dragon. There is no sign of any legs in St. John's dragon. In the legends the meaning of a dragon is a body of drilled foot-soldiers marching in step.

FLAME, or *carrot-coloured*. The literal translation, *flame-coloured*, is adopted, because there may be a symbolic meaning in it, though in English *flame-colour* is hardly a defined colour, and, if anything, seems borrowed from smoky red theatrical flames. This is the colour of yellow flame.

FILLETS: used only in this book of the New Testament; but the writers of the LXX. use it in their translation of Esther i. 11: 'To bring in the queen to him, to make her queen, and to put on her the fillet, and to show her to the rulers, and her beauty to the nations, that she was beautiful'—as if their Greek word 'fillet' would *not* adequately translate *crown-royal*, but required a paraphrase. So in Isaiah lxii. 3 *royal diadem* is translated *fillet of royalty* in the LXX. Hence it seems safer to take the ordinary Greek sense of the word, viz., a *fillet*, or *band*, round the head, tied behind in a bow, and with ends hanging perhaps as low as the shoulders. The Persians

used such a fillet as a mark of royalty; and Alexander, by borrowing it himself, set the fashion for its use as an adornment in statuary. The Greek word *diadem* is anglicized to mean a *tiara* or *crown*, and that the Greek word never meant.

5.—ARMED WITH. There is no meaning of military armour here. The Greek merely means *with*, in the sense of using as an implement, *invested with*. Some English poet speaks of ladies as being ‘armed with smiles,’ and shows in this figure at once his skill and the poverty of our language. The word *armed* is put in parenthesis, although its meaning, as above, is in the Greek, as a caution against misunderstanding its meaning by treating it too literally.

6.—WILDERNESS. In many Eastern countries there are special words for (1) the *village*, or town, site, within which is every building or place *in the village*; (2) around it lie lands cultivated as *gardens*, usually fenced, or as *fields*, usually unfenced, but divided only by boundary stones for separate cultivation, under any number of holders of one or more of these divisions; (3) *wilderness*, or uncultivated grazing-ground. The derivation of this word in the Greek is not from the things growing on it being uncultivated and *wild*, but from the place being lonely, desolate and *wild*; it would particularly apply to tracts absolutely barren and waste. To a Jew there was a special meaning in the word *wilderness*, from its being the general term, in the LXX., for the place of the wanderings of the Israelites (from Exod. xv. 22) till they entered Canaan.

Expository Notes.

1.—A great sign—of things shortly to come to pass (i. 1)—now appears to St. John, as he stands in the heaven of God’s throne, and in presence of the court surrounding that throne. No part of that court, or of the

heaven under which it stands, can be included amongst the signs of what was to occur on earth. This *sign* of the woman, we must assume till otherwise informed, appears to St. John, as did the seals and trumpets, as a sign, a symbolic scene, of events on earth and in *its* heaven. This sign surpasses all others of the kind in importance, so much so as to be called *great*. Only the symbol of God in heaven could be called *the great* sign, after the analogy of *the great* sea, *the great* river, *the great* King; but we find, in 2 Sam. vii. 9, a sufficient example of the idea a Jew would have in speaking of a *great* sign of what was to be in the earthly heaven. The description of this woman fully bears out the *greatness* of her position in heaven. *Signs in heaven*, such as those described by our Lord (Luke xxi. 11, 25), represent something effectively operating and existing on earth; judged, indeed, by the inhabitants of the earth from its observed effect and appearance, being too far off for their personal knowledge. In prophetic language a star represents a chief or leader (Num. xxiv. 17; Dan. viii. 10), or a god (Amos v. 26). We may safely say that, in current astrology, the star was not considered to *be* the god, or ruler, whom it was either literally or figuratively taken to personify, but was supposed to exercise a most powerful controlling influence from him. It is so identified with the people upon earth whom it influences, that in our second and third chapters the errors, deeds, and punishments of the one are applied to the other. As prophetic symbols, no doubt, *signs* borrow a general character from the astrological notions of a star. They are stars and more—ideal constellations, so developed in detail as to convey symbolic information from every part and act; and so intimately connected with the people whom they influence, as to be in many respects identified with them.

The four chief signs here intimately grouped, and acting together, are the woman, her son, the dragon, and Michael.

The dragon is distinctly called (verse 9) the *devil*, *Satan*, an invisible but real being. Michael also is an invisible but real being (Jude 9; also see Dan. x. 13, etc.). It will be consistent, therefore, if the woman and her son represent real but invisible beings; for instance, the Holy Spirit in the guise of the souls born of Him—the bride of Christ—and Christ Himself. But as (in xvii. 7) we have an angel's interpretation of a sign seen in the wilderness, very similar to this dragon, it will be safest to begin interpretation with the sign about which we have this help.

Going back to interpret the other signs by the experience gained from the interpretation of the dragon, we come first to the woman. Like the Son of man on earth, in the first vision (i. 13), she has no rainbow; that is only seen round the throne (iv. 3), and strong angel (x. 1), which were both in the upper heaven. She is clothed with the sun, a sign peculiar to this woman. Sunrise had been a prophetic metaphor for the coming of the Messiah in the LXX. (Isa. ix. 2; xlix. 6; Mal. iv. 2); adopted in Hebrew poetry, and in the New Testament writers (Matt. iv. 16; Luke i. 78; 2 Pet. i. 19), as a name for His coming in St. John's time. In reference to God's people, the sun, or at least his light, is figuratively used of Christ, or of His teaching (John i. 9; Eph. v. 14). This woman, clothed, not in bright garments to represent her own righteousness before God, but in the sun itself, should represent a person, or persons, who actually emit Christ's light to enlighten the earth. Yet it is a quality no more inherent than the righteousness with which the saints are *clothed* before God (iii. 5; vii. 9, etc.). This clothing in the sun is peculiar to this vision. The moon is *under her feet*, an expression quoted by our Lord and others (Matt. xxii. 44; Heb. ii. 8) from the Old Testament, always to imply subjugation, or at least thorough subjection. The moon is the chief of all the lesser lights.

(Gen. i. 16), and, while all others vanish before the sun, the moon is sometimes seen in heaven with the sun, but in a condition suggesting it as an illustration of thorough subjection. In connection with the sun of God's righteous sovereignty and light, the moon might represent the highest human skill and wisdom, in or out of the churches.

The twelve stars, in contrast to the moon, would mean constant and trustworthy guides. Of course, there is no distinction made between heavenly bodies as being luminous by reflected or by intrinsic light; such distinction was not known. The light of stars, as shown in words, actions, feelings, or writings, was from heaven, and, however feeble compared to the sun and moon, was true. They represent a set at the head of some complete organization, or cycle, or both, as the twelve sons of Jacob were the fathers of the twelve tribes, embracing the whole of the promised seed of Abraham; the twelve months and twelve signs of the zodiac embraced all time and all heaven in their recurring cycle; the twelve foundations (xxi. 19), or twelve gates (xxi. 21), or twelve Apostles' names (xxi. 14), are symbols of a similar order in the heavenly Jerusalem. As with the ten commandments, the number, or individual identification, is kept practically sound; but how far it can be called scientifically accurate it is useless to argue. There are twelve Apostles usually cited, but no one can name them; one we know was changed, and all the evidence is in favour of more having been changed. We know of fourteen, thirteen of whom were Apostles together just before James's martyrdom. So there were practically thirteen tribes. So the crown of twelve stars might very well include the guidance given by the writers of the New Testament, and by the acts and teaching of the Apostles, and of those who have lived in union of spirit and teaching with them.

As the dragon is called Satan, because Satan inspires it in the pursuit of earthly lusts, so the woman might be called the Spirit of God, who inspires her, were it not that the analogy would be imperfect. Satan finds men flesh, that is, guided by fleshly instincts, and he maintains them in living to the flesh, and is shown as acting directly on earth. God's Spirit finds men flesh, and creates in them new life of the Spirit, and with His guidance *they* act directly on earth. The woman seems to represent the aggregate of these new spiritual lives, working on earth in the guise of all true servants of God, and so free from any connection with the ceremonies and organization of either the Mosaic or Apostolic churches, that she cannot be identified with either, though her symbolic equipment is in harmony with both. Of course, the Spirit acts in other ways than that which it is the office of this vision to show; and so, alas! does Satan. The woman has on her head no fillet of any official secular authority, but a circlet about her head of twelve shining stars.

3.—The dragon is called the devil and Satan (verse 9); but though thus called, it appears in heaven as a symbolic form of the physical guise, or existence, under which Satan (for the purposes of this vision) acts on earth—under which he develops his temper and purposes amongst men and things in the organized nations then known.

To interpret this symbolic form, we have the help of the angel's interpretation of a similar form (xvii. 7, etc.). First of all, it represents the mind or spirit which causes men to group together into an organized kingdom or empire. The flame-colour, only occurring elsewhere in the horse of the second seal, indicates republican strife or jealousy. The inevitable *enforcement* of submission—the accepted recourse to force and numbers as the always open court of final appeal, whose decisions always justify

the winner for the time being—gives a colour to the whole dragon. The seven heads, a figure taken from the seven hills of Rome, represent that its structure, as organizer of empire, was founded upon every suitable form of State religion—upon a complete unrestricted use of all that could be made useful in all the forms of religious belief, which research and invention could combine to root into the *earth* of organized States. From the earliest times up to Constantine the Great inclusive, the Roman State (like its predecessors, but more systematically) embodied in its religious worship gods, beliefs and rites, wherever it found them, and only controlled or forbade them so far as was thought wise for upholding secure government. Even when Christians were persecuted, it was on the plea that they were an obstinate and disloyal set, who insulted the State religion; and the test exacted by the most consistent imperial magistrates, as sufficient to free the Christian from further punishment, was, not abjuration, but a mere act of homage to the Emperor as divine—a pledge that they held their religion for the support and defence of the State, and as vassals subject in religion to its direction. The seven heads also represent seven kings, or forms of State government. As with religion, so with organization of State control; the supreme power in the empire of Rome, and of its predecessors, passed successively, or in combination, through every possible form of earthly government. All varieties of detail as to election, succession, combination—chiefs, kings, senates, consuls, or presidents, dictators, military emperors, in succession in some places, or simultaneously—all have been used as heads by the devil. The connection between religion and empire seems to have been close enough to justify the use of the same symbol, the *heads*, for both. We have had in Australasia examples of races of men almost destitute of both, and in America examples of races somewhat advanced in combining both. The two,

religion and empire, as they first appear in history on stone or papyrus, appear as twins, and combine together and develop each other. In our day a body of highly intellectual writers, wishing to overturn the one, have decided that they must advocate the overturning of both, or must else give up any plausible hope of overturning either.

Rome, as the city which in St. John's day had the pre-eminence over all other kingdoms and religions (xvii. 18), though not named in Revelation, is, like every proper name in these symbolical visions, only a symbol of all earthly empire, excepting theocratic Israel, from the earliest history to the end of this age. We shall hereinafter see that religions subservient to the support of earthly power, and every kind of government based on force, will be overturned together.

The fillets on each head of the flame-coloured dragon may show how every form, or combination of forms, of any government at any place or time has always exercised, so far as it has been competent—and if incompetent has claimed—complete official supremacy. Whether that government be a despot or pope, a hereditary or elected council, a bureaucracy elected by a majority of heads, a guild, or trades-union—whoever be the captain of the ship of state assumes the fillet. The ten horns show that the supremacy would be simultaneously developed on *earth*, *i.e.*, on Christendom in its widest sense, in a considerable number of independent powers. The number ten indicating that ten are shown as samples—that it is not as if that particular number were necessary to make a perfect set, or to exhaust all the numberless existing minor powers which might exist, all partaking of the same nature. Consider, for instance, the ten commandments, or *words* (Exod. xxxiv. 28). Christendom has not yet settled even what the ten are, and our Lord teaches how incomplete they are in the letter, inasmuch as each is but a sample of

numberless minor commands, which spring up and exist with them.

4.—We are, then, to understand that the devil was allowed to work in this guise upon earth, and that the horrid and repellent structure of the greatest known earthly civilizations was, and is, worked by him, and actuated by his principles. The lust for power (next to animal craving and recklessness) is the strongest temptation which the devil can work on a large scale ; it was one of those selected to test our Saviour (Matt. iv. 8), and our Lord draws attention to its dangerous power in several discourses (Matt. xix. 23) and parables (Matt. xxi. 33). The devil *has* worked it, and, however noble the natural laws by which empire exists, yet the empire which Satan has built up is hopelessly immoral and bad. Still, there is a contest of good in this furnace of evil, whereby graces are evolved and grow up in believers' hearts.

The dragon's tail—that is, wherever it had passed, or come into contact with, others—dragged, like a drag-net, a third part of the stars, and threw them into the earth. What with being extinguished and weakened under these imperial organizations, a third part of the guides and lights of the civilized communities, both official or in independent prominent positions, were drawn along by the devil in the guise of this empire, and thrown down, disestablished, and left to burn on the earth, or to be extinguished, without support, and, as it were, trampled under ill treatment by the State.

5.—The description of the male son cannot be intended for any other than Christ (Ps. ii. 7-9)—the man (1 Tim. ii. 5, 6), the corner foundation-stone of His body, the Church, on earth—and all the spiritual effect upon man of His first visit to earth. It is very suggestive, and surely wonderful, that in this vision we find the devil is seen as a dragon, in touch with the *earth*, giving life to the empire ; but the Spirit of God is not shown as in similar touch

with the earth, nor as giving His power and authority to any organized church nor empire on earth. As a Son of man, He has been shown in the early chapters in even closer touch with the new life of those who live in the spirit; His action is there surpassingly greater, for He actually has created them anew, and will establish them into a kingdom as much higher than the empire of the earth as, we may almost say, heaven is from hell. Our Lord was offered Satan's *empire* (Matt. iv. 8-11) on Satan's terms, but He declined it for the *service* of God. His refusal of it cannot be too clearly and willingly followed by the wise, whether we consider only the promised end, or only the path which leads to that end. On the one hand, we, as servants of God, seek to enjoy the care, and to follow the guidance, of the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the protection and happiness of His sheep; and, on the other hand, the worshippers of Satan seek to grasp at an empire of force and fraud, out of the hands of the prince of cruelty and craft, against many human competitors. To that fanciful end the worshippers of Satan surrender themselves—without God's help, and with no reserve of their own—into the power of their adversary, the father of lies and of evil, who *can* only redeem his offers to one by breaking those he makes to others. Now, though the special action of God's Spirit on the sons He adopts to be heirs of eternal life is confined to them, yet it gives to them, as an aggregation—as the true invisible Church of the elect of God—an existence and power superior to the, likewise invisible, devil in his dragon. Though their power be not recognised as such to the earthly eyes of the dwellers on the earth, they have immense influence on earth nevertheless; and they prefer it, as our Lord did, to the condition of worshippers of the devil; and they are consistently shown here, as the woman clothed in the sun, having a superior position in earth's heaven, to that which Satan himself has as the gaudy and

crowned dragon. As the dragon is called Satan, and represents his visible empire on earth, so the woman may be called the true Church (in modern phrase), and represents the visible churches on earth, so far as they are impelled, consciously or incidentally, by true Christian motives.

We have said that the male son represents Christ, who was born into the world, and lived a short time in touch with it. He laid the foundation of His earthly kingdom, indeed, but did not give a particle of life or authority to any kingdom supported on earth, as those empowered by the dragon were. He was caught away, and now lives in the heaven of God and of the Spirit. He will again return to rule a kingdom co-extensive with the whole world, and will be (at least) as much in touch with it as Satan is in touch with his empire. In it the dwellers upon earth will be so completely organized and led, by Him and by His servants, after the subjugation of His enemies by God (1 Cor. xv. 25), that He will tend all nations with an iron staff.

6.—Michael and his angels seem grouped together, as being all of a similar kind. They do not represent the church, nor men at all, but all angels, and angelic action and temper, in St. John's usual sense of the word. They are, no doubt, figuratively used to include their followers amongst men, so far as men are guided by them. Where that is the case, all men, so far as they are actuated from God by a conscientious choice of righteous and noble motives, must be included as of Michael's host.

So the dragon and his angels symbolically represent invisible beings, not included in the dragon's earthly empire; and, indeed, care seems to be taken to show that, in the fight, the dragon represents, and is to be called, Satan himself (verse 9). Of course, Satan's angels would be of the like kind, not men, but evil angels. Yet, figuratively, men actuated by them might be included in the name. We can only suppose that Michael, as in

Daniel's vision (Dan. x. 13), represents God's angelic host contending in the affairs of men with the devil and all other evil spirits—a chief prince of heaven contesting on *earth* with the prince of this world (our Lord in John xii. 31) over the whole field offered by this planet. It is a war of right and wrong, of God's honour and God's dishonour, apart from the empire and from *earth*. And as to the men who follow the one or the other host : the struggle is not only between men, but is in each man, and presumably includes all that contest between good and evil which we know as a fact is going on in the mind of every man, and of which there has been no symbolization in any of the visions previous to this one.

Having thus considered the nature of the leading symbols, with the caution that, as in any ordinary civil war—say, Israel against Judah, nobles against commons, North against South—the title of the sides is figuratively given to every follower, we come to the historic interpretation. It is quite impossible for ourselves or other dwellers upon earth to pronounce what particular individuals they are who are symbolized by the woman as being true servants of God. But of the visible church, which she also represents, we know that Adam was one ; he was the first we know of ; and in his time the coming of the male child, Christ in His human form, was foretold to Satan himself (Gen. iii. 15). Up to the time of our Lord the church, figured in this woman, existed free from organized religious persecution, taking a position of external similarity to the families or nations of the civilization around them ; and, whatever their national wars, and however they were rallied to fight for their own God (1 Sam. xvii. 45-47), other nations simply saw God's people acting as they themselves acted (1 Sam. xvii. 43 ; see the tone of the King of Assyria's letter to Hezekiah, 2 Kings xix. 10-13). But Christ's advent was the commencement of persecutions of the members of the visible

church, for the testimony they bore to the glad tidings of Christ, individually and as a body. From the time of the ascension, the true church was in the wilderness, having no honour given her in the policies, struggles, and corporations of civilization ; only accessible to all who go to seek her. There, like Israel of old, she has a place prepared for her for twelve hundred and sixty years. During that time the servants of God, who profess, and by their conduct testify, their belief in Christ's Gospel, are almost lost to history ; they had no distinctive sphere of action in making history, and no place in its records. The testimony of professing Churchmen went off in side issues even in St. Paul's day, and was soon as much a question of party and of politics as the old Gentile religions of David's or Hezekiah's time. Soon the professors of each new teaching were at least as hot persecutors of each other. The contest between all these political states and churches on the one side, and the pure glad tidings of Christ on the other, may be said to come into history twelve hundred and sixty years after the taking of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), about the time of Wiclif (died A.D. 1384) and of Huss (died A.D. 1415).

Again, to give the widest figurative interpretation to the woman, as standing for the visible organization on *earth*, which followed up spiritual truth by profession and consistent general conduct—as the dragon stands for the visible organization on earth of those who worshipped empire, and consistently made acquisition and power their ruling object—she vanished out of the fellowship of states at the destruction of Jerusalem. The Jews, as a church, were then cast off, as foretold by their own prophets and by our Lord, and were definitely separated from the believing Christians. And the recognised Christian churches, when they gradually raised themselves into political power, did so by an organization and conduct quite opposed to Christ's example and teaching. No

simple Gospel-church appeared in history until it attracted political notice in Switzerland, England and Hungary, some twelve hundred and sixty years afterwards.

SECTION II. VERSES 7 TO 12. WAR IN HEAVEN.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

8.—DID NOT PREVAIL. The Greek word is literally *was not strong*. The adjective is used (v. 2; x. 1; xviii. 21) as an epithet of angels, and (xviii. 10) of Babylon. The original meaning applies to strength of body; metaphorically it is used, like our *strong*, of any kind of strength. The word *prevail* is too much in favour of the devil and his angels; *had no strength*, or *could make nothing of it*, give the notion more nearly.

A PLACE OF THEIRS: *i.e.*, any place occupied by them. In Dan. ii. 35 (LXX.) it is 'no place was found *for* them'; but it is the same idea, and in the case of Daniel's expression history proves to us what Daniel (writing in Aramaic) meant.

9.—DEVIL is Greek for *slanderer, false accuser*; SATAN is Hebrew for *adversary*: as *Christ* is Greek, and *Messiah* Hebrew, for *anointed*.

11.—BECAUSE OF the Lamb's shedding His blood, and their maintaining a faithful testimony. It is not *by means of*, so much as *by aid of*; *i.e.*, without that they would not have conquered, but have been conquered. St. John uses the same preposition in his Gospel (vi. 57), 'As . . . I live *because of* the Father, . . . He will live *because of* me.'

Expository Notes.

9.—Meanwhile the war between Michael and Satan, good and evil, was already hot in St. Paul's time. St. Paul himself was accused by Jews before the Gentile world as being no Apostle, but a self-seeking swindler.

By the purer and more philosophic of the pagan authorities the servants of Christ were accused as a pestilent and seditious sect, and their inflexible obstinacy was punished by cruel and degrading death. The war gradually extended, amongst those authorized by Satan, to wielding power and influence in the political *heaven* of the empire, till, about two hundred years after the Revelation was written, the worship of demons—paganism—was actually upset, and vanished from the political heaven. In its place was established a State profession of Christianity, out of which the teaching of the simple Gospel at once dropped from neglect. The recognised Christianity became a political modification of Christian teaching, adapted as much as possible to suit and invigorate the old forms of worship, the old influence of priests, and the old Satanic principles of governments. When once established, this pseudo-, or harlot-, Christianity grew till it surpassed paganism, not in its sublimer truths only, but in more exalted blasphemy, bolder assumption, and more hard-hearted persecution.

10.—The fall of paganism, when Satan as a visible luminary was cast out of heaven, caused an immense change in the tone of the ruling power—from that of St. John's time to Constantine's. No future government enlisted the arts, and spent money and influence in promoting, professedly for their own sakes, bloodshed and licentiousness. For public conduct, however evil, some excuse consistent with Christianity was sought; if pretexts were wanting, dispensations were sought from teachers who claimed to be Christian. At the worst, these teachers always preached a righteous and omnipotent God. So that the fall of Satan from the time of Constantine is the event of most importance to the dwellers upon earth throughout the empire. It is not possible for us thoroughly to realize the change from the government of an emperor who believed in no God, and

at best professed the patronage of a set of demons, under which he took whatever course he wished, to that of rulers who believed in responsibility to the God of the Christian creeds; but we have in inspired words (verses 10, 11) a sketch of its grandeur, coupled with a warning as to the grievous mischief Satan would still do, even on *earth*. We have to remember that, at the time paganism was thrown down (A.D. 300), even the dignitaries of the churches were very far from being so bad as they afterwards became; and the members of the church, its elders and deacons, were still generally sincere, and for generations exercised a great influence for good over all the territory of the empire. They founded works and spread practical ideas of religion and benevolence, which continue amongst us now, in contrast to the remains of pagan circuses, theatres and baths.

SECTION III. VERSES 13 TO 17. THE PERILS OF THE WOMAN.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

13.—PERSECUTE: literally to *chase, pursue in order to catch*, especially of pursuit of a flying enemy.

14.—WINGS OF THE GREAT EAGLE. In Exod. xix. 4 Moses is instructed by God on Sinai to tell the Israelites that He bore them on eagles' wings out of Egypt, and brought them (close to) Himself. In both cases the wings seem a mere poetical expression, for of course God could not, humanly speaking, be described as carrying anything to Himself on His own wings, nor as bearing up the Israelites on their own wings.

A SEASON, AND SEASONS, AND HALF A SEASON. This expression, but with the word *time* for *season*, is found in our translation of the Aramaic of Dan. vii. 25, and of the Hebrew in Dan. xii. 7. The editors of the LXX. translate the Aramaic into *until a season and seasons and*

half a season, agreeing in this with St. John ; but they translate the Hebrew *for a season of seasons and half a season*.

15.—RIVER-BORNE : so the Greek ; but the term is rather an awkward one in English. The notion conveyed is, that after the woman flew up, the snake immediately threw the water, with intent to get her adrift upon it, should she not fly away in time to save herself, or should she be unable to fly clear of it.

Expository Notes.

13.—The time from the beginning to the end of this war is only so far fixed that it was while the woman was in the wilderness—suppose A.D. 70 to 1330, or A.D. 100 to 1360—and early enough in that time to allow of the continued persecution of her while she was still in the wilderness. Perhaps our Lord may refer, primarily, to this fall of Satan out of overt dominion when He said, ‘ I beheld Satan, as lightning, fall from heaven ’ (Luke x. 18) ; and we may suppose that Satan himself then also ‘ saw that he was thrown into the earth ’—that his fall had then begun, and would continue. Or Satan’s apprehension of his fall may date from our Lord’s ascension, after the male child had been caught up into heaven. However that may be, we learn that for three and a half seasons Satan tried to persecute the true Church of Christ and failed (verse 14). The ‘ three and a half seasons ’ seems to be a phrase used by Daniel (Dan. vii. 25) for twelve hundred and sixty years, during which time the woman was enabled to escape out of his reach to the wilderness. This almost implies the cessation of miraculous powers in the church. Had the heads of the church continued to be chosen, and sanctioned, by the gift of wonderful miraculous powers, it is not clear how they could have dropped out of the world’s sight *into the wilderness*. The expressions in verse 6, repeated in verse 14, seem to refer to the same event. In that case the *season and seasons and a half* means three and a half

nominal years of three hundred and sixty days, or twelve hundred and sixty days. For twelve hundred and sixty years we know of no systematic persecution by the dragon, in the guise of his empire directed against men for living a pure and Christian life. There were persecutions for active preaching, and for dogma, and for supporters, or assumed supporters, of either ; but difficulties arose on points beyond the inspired revelation—which was generally professedly accepted on both sides—on subtle metaphysical questions, which were nearly always used as a mere means of getting increased political power, and stricter subordination under it. The authoritative literature was issued in floods—not aimed at true Christian piety, but fatally effective in floating away men's thoughts and faith from the 'way' of Christ. Pure ignorance of any other facts and interpretations of the Gospel than could reach mankind through the ceremonies of the churches, and the teaching of the clerical orders, usually left those who sought and believed in a Saviour out of reach of persecution. Saints there were among both clerics and their disciples, but in the wilderness of universal ignorance they were left in peace.

15.—*And the snake threw out of his mouth after the woman water, as if a river.* We have no parallel to this figure in Israelitish history, poetry, or prophecy ; and it is necessary to dis sever in our minds our Lord's use of water in a figurative sense, and Israel's supply of water in a typical sense, from this figure. This water is from the *mouth*, and it is hostile ; it is to prevail by confusing, misleading, hampering, chilling, and even drowning, the traveller whom the flood overtakes. The figure contrasts with that of the Son of man with a sharp broadsword proceeding out of his mouth (i. 16). We have, in interpreting this latter figure, to avoid all the usual meanings in cases where a sword is used for actual war, slaughter, or pain akin to slaughter. The *sword* here figured represents

what really comes from the mouth—teaching and writing; it is only figuratively a sword, rightly dividing entangled things; it is the reverse of confusing, choking, and hindering. Taking this figure as our guide, the water poured out by the snake is the teaching and writing from the mouth of those inspired by the devil. It will represent all the false theories, false facts (so called), and all the floods of contending babbling and quibbles, upon subjects on the face of them insoluble—such as whether there are in the Trinity three persons and one substance, or three substances and one person, both of which propositions are orthodox, having been formally settled by counting heads at an ‘œcumenical’ council, though no one has successfully cleared up the meaning of either. Lastly, the representation includes floods of cursing and anathemas, issued in order to prevent any advance in the apprehension of truth by an inquirer.

16.—It is singular how all this flood of babbling ‘doctrines’—miracles by bones, and false lives of saints, false decretals, and so forth—are in our day passed away. One may almost say that not a soul in Christendom would have felt more secure, were it known that Napoleon had been wilily entrapped into swearing the treaty of Amiens over a box of bones; yet it *was* thought, by one of the best statesmen and most fearless leaders in Europe, to be worth while to entrap Prince Harold of England into so swearing to a treaty, or at least to declare that Harold had been so trapped. It cannot be said that this flood of superstition has been rendered obsolete by the true conversion of the rulers, statesmen, and people of Christendom to the service of God and Christ. The flood has, indeed, all been swallowed down, but, as often as not, by those who still make war against the profession of Christianity, and against those who, in keeping the commandments of God, bear testimony to Christ and His teaching. Meanwhile, the true believers had escaped the flood, as it were

on wings, one escaping here and one there; but not, as Israel, borne on God's wings (Exod. xix. 4), to live all together in one community and fellowship in the wilderness.

17.—The last remark made on the dragon, after the description of his war with Michael in heaven, is that it, the dragon, went away to make war with the seed of the woman on earth. Such a war would, of course, be on similar lines to that with Michael and his angels, not physical war and persecution, which would directly touch the regenerated lives of the saints, so much as a war carried on by means of temptation, terror, false teaching, concealment or perversion of revealed truth, and so forth. We have this war of twelve hundred and sixty years, and the way in which the dragon got the beast to wage it, further mentioned in xiii. 7, in one of a set of seven visions which are not shown as a series linked together under a common name—as seals, thunders, etc.—but which symbolize each a leading incident of this war. Satan is shown on one side acting through two beasts in the first two visions (xiii. 1, 11). After an episode of the lamb on Mount Zion, showing where the spiritual life of God's saints had its maintenance and protection, there are successively shown incidents in which five angels are the agents (xiv. 6, 8, 9, 15, 17), each symbolizing the physical results, on the inhabitants of the earth, of the spiritual lives of the saints.

The series of seals, trumpets, etc., are not shown here each as a separate vision, like Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the image, and Daniel's vision of the same four empires as beasts. These visions are preceded by an elaborate introduction, placing the exhibition of all the series on the same platform, and showing the introduction of each series under the directions of the same Creator and His heavenly court. We see indubitable evidence that different series frequently embrace the same times, but it is contrary

to all the surroundings, and to frequent statements, to take them as mere repetitions of the same events, like Pharaoh's visions of the ears of wheat, and of the kine. Each series also contains symbolic episodes giving views of important facts contemporaneous with each series, and important to the right understanding of them, but which could not be included in it, being inconsistent with its special purport and imagery. So here we have, in an episodal preface, three or four purely spiritual existences introduced—the woman, Michael, the dragon—omitting Divine beings and subordinate creatures as being necessary to make intelligible the seven visions of the war between Christ's spiritual saints, and the devil and His angels on earth. *On earth* has been already defined : it means under the conditions defined by the seals, and under the organized strife and contention described by the trumpets.

CHAPTER XIII.

ORIGINAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION

- 1 AND I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having
ten horns and seven heads, and ten fillets on its
horns, and a name of blasphemy upon its heads.—
2 And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and
its feet as if a bear's, and its mouth as if a lion's
mouth: and the dragon gave it its power, and its
3 throne, and great authority.—And [I saw] one of its
heads as if slain to death: and the stroke of its
4 [the beast's] death was healed; and the whole earth
wondered after the beast, and they salaamed to the
Dragon because it gave authority to the beast, and
salaamed to the beast, saying, 'Who is like the
5 beast? and who is able to fight with it?' And a
mouth talking great things and blasphemies was
given it; and authority was given it to do forty-two
months.
6 And it opened its mouth into blasphemies against
God, to blaspheme his name and his tent, those who
7 are encamped in the heaven. And it was given it to
make war with the Saints, and to conquer them.
And authority was given it over every tribe, and
8 people, and tongue, and nation. And all who dwell
on the earth will salaam to it—whose name has not
been written in the scroll of life of the Lamb slain
9 from the foundation of the world. If any one has
10 an ear, let him hear: if any one [draws on] into
captivity, he draws on into captivity; if any one

must be killed, he must be killed with the sword: here is the endurance and the faith of the Saints.

- 11 And I saw another beast coming up out of the
earth: and it had two horns like a lamb, and was
12 talking as if a dragon; and does all the authority of
the first beast in front of it, and makes the earth and
the dwellers in it that they will salaam the first beast
13 whose stroke of his death was healed, and does great
signs that even he makes fire out of the heaven
14 descend into the earth in front of men; and leads
the dwellers on the earth astray, because of the signs
which were given it to do in front of the beast,
saying to the dwellers on the earth, to make a like-
ness to the beast which has the stroke of the sword
15 and lived. And it was given it to give spirit to the
likeness of the beast, that the likeness of the beast
should both speak and do, that whoever should not
salaam the likeness of the beast should be killed.
16 And it makes all the small and the great, and the
rich and the poor, and the free and the slaves, that
they should give them a mark on their right hand,
17 or upon their forehead, that no one may be able to
buy or sell except one who has the mark, the name
18 of the beast, or the number of its name. Here is
skill: let him who has sense total up the number of
the beast, for it is a man's number, and its number
is 666.

THE VISION OF THE TWO BEASTS.

SECTION I. VERSES 1 TO 10. THE TEN-HORNED
BEAST.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

3.—AS IF SLAIN: exactly the same expression as is used (v. 6) in describing the Lamb; but here 'to death'

is added, as we say *to* death; meaning that actual death was seen to occur; or, more probably, to make clear that the beast's death resulted from the slaying of its head.

AFTER THE BEAST. St. John uses a similar expression in the mouth of the Pharisees (John xii. 19). 'See! the world went away after him.' So St. Paul (1 Tim. v. 15). In all such cases, as in verse 15 just above, the idea of a *following after* seems included, as well as that of *after* in time. The Greek word is, most literally, *behind*.

5.—TO DO: meaning to *do*, or *act*, for forty-two months (Dan. viii. 24); or, possibly, to *spend* forty-two months.

6.—OPENED ITS MOUTH: a phrase customary to introduce a series of discourses (Psa. lxxviii. 2; Matt. v. 2).

TENT, etc., referring to the tent (so-called tabernacle) in which was God's name on earth; and, indeed, using it as the symbol for which it was meant (Heb. viii. 2).

10.—DRAWS ON: as of an army *advancing slowly*.

Expository Notes.

1.—The dragon, having started this flood (xii. 15), is now shown as organizing the secular persecuting powers to make war with the woman's seed—all in whom the good seed of the Gospel is germinating, and in the way to grow to fruitfulness. We have had a vision of the action of Satan, as a dragon, under the guise of earthly kingdoms, warring with Michael, and persecuting the woman. We now have him warring with the woman's seed, as prince of the kingdoms of the earth. We enter on a vision of the behaviour of the kingdoms under his guiding influence.

The vision takes the history up at the time of St. John, after a short preface which identifies it with Daniel's empires (Dan. viii.), and it passes rapidly over about four

hundred years which elapsed before the empire took its divided form, into ten kingdoms.

St. John sees a beast coming up out of the sea—not the Great Sea, as in Daniel—with ten horns, beside seven heads. The ten horns already wear the fillets of earthly supreme authority, *i.e.*, the aspect of the beast is that which it will take after the division of the empire amongst ten independent governments. Its seven heads imply that the beast has lived, or will have lived, by means of a complete set of every kind of supreme earthly government conceivable, based on every kind of available blasphemous religion. The beast's structure partakes of characteristics built into it out of the four empires of Daniel: the Assyrian lion, the Medo-Persian bear, the Greek leopard, and the Roman general form. One of the heads is as if slain; like the Lamb (v. 6), its religion and kingship were put to death by human action, and presumably by a specious trial, by whatever arbitrament was accepted as final within the territory of the empire at that time, whether by wars, or by treaties, or by numbers. The beast, however, after this deathstroke recovered life under ten horns, still with the name of blasphemy upon it. The whole earth accepted the Divine right of the beast, blasphemous and cruel as it might be. They worshipped the dragon, *i.e.*, the practices and tenets of those actuated by the devil and his angels in the previous vision, because these gave the beast authority; and they worshipped the beast for the simple reason that they could not resist it. The beast was not remiss in taking every advantage of this homage, by making claims, and vaunting its rights, at the expense of any amount of blasphemy. And these powers were given it for forty-two months, or twelve hundred and sixty days, if we take nominal months of thirty days, as we before took nominal years of three hundred and sixty days. The time, reckoning a year for a day, brings the termination of this kind of authority of

the beast up to the close of the last century—say the time of Voltaire.

The interpretation of the beast—the name of the reality of which he is the symbol—has been sometimes given as the *secular persecuting power*. This, in a sense, may be true; but it requires an unusual sense to be given to *secular*, for the beast often persecuted on what are usually called religious and clerical grounds. The beast rather represents governments which take possession, so far as they can, in a peremptory manner of the bodies and minds of people, to convert them into organized material subject to their will. The main principle of the beast is that it acquires organized strength, and, wherever it has that strength, uses it to force its will on the weaker. (See Hon. Auberon Herbert's 'Ethics of Dynamite,' *Contemporary Review*, May, 1894.) This definition applies to the second beast, which, with some lamblike characteristics, talks like a dragon, and aids the first beast.

6.—The only mouth which could be considered authoritative enough, during these dark ages, to represent the whole empire, and the only mouth whose talk of great things and blasphemies, as described in the vision (xiii. 5), received professed approval by all the *kings*, and were freely used as authority for any war, spoliation, or tyranny, to the support of which they could be interpreted, was that of the professedly Christian churches. Of these the chief were the African, Syrian, Greek, and Roman. The axiom that the voice of the priest must be accepted as the voice of God ('Apostolic Constitutions,' ii. 28) seems to have been practically enforced in all, and taught in most. For instance, the Apostolic Constitutions enforce what must have been extensively taught even before the time of Constantine; and in them (ii. 31, 34) we find such teaching as this: 'He that casts reproach on his Bishop, opposes God . . . who said concerning the priests and the judges, "Ye are gods."' 'After God, the Bishop is

become a father to thee.' 'These [Bishops] have obtained from God the power of life and death, in their judging of sinners and condemning them to the death of eternal fire; as also of loosing returning sinners from their sins, and of restoring them to a new life.' 'Account these [Bishops] worthy to be esteemed your rulers and kings, and bring them tribute as to kings.' This compilation, the Apostolic Constitutions, seems to have been made in Asia Minor, being Oriental in origin and Greek in language. The Bishops in the seditious factions, who already claimed to be gods and kings, with greater powers than the devil, and with similar falsity, had the hardihood to claim in our Saviour's time (Luke iv. 6) powers over heaven and hell, as well as over earth.

The blasphemies uttered by these Bishops and writers were adopted into the State by Constantine, and the creeds were modified, and the organization of the Church imperialized, as the various exigencies of the ruling factions in State and in Church required. This was done more frequently for intensifying war than for consolidating peace, until the Papacy gradually got an influence sufficient to procure toleration of its assumed infallibility. This made further alteration (after the Athanasian Creed) illogical and unnecessary. These blasphemies (verse 5, etc.) are described by St. John in an idiom difficult not only to us, but, judging from the corrections and mistakes of the MSS., to many transcribers. The three oldest MSS. agree in stating that the blasphemy is against God's name (neuter), and His tent (feminine), who are encamped (masculine) in the heaven. It is possible that, having written 'God's name and His tent'—a figure so often used for God's encamping amongst His people on earth, as in the wilderness, and as in (xxi. 3)—St. John added the next words, *those who are encamped in heaven*, in opposition to *tent*, to show that he did *not* here refer to the tent in which God dwelt on earth, but to the tent which

God stretches over all the glorified *saints* in heaven (vii. 15), and that it is *they* who, as well as God's own name, will be the butt of these blasphemies. The desertion of the cause of Christ by such a vast number of those who chose for earthly objects to blaspheme His name, seems to recall to St. John's mind the words of his Saviour's solemn warning (John xv. 17-21); for, under the inspiration of the Spirit, he takes the very words which Christ used before solemn declarations, 'He that hath an ear, let him hear,' as the prelude of a warning to all Christians that they may expect no special protection, but must, like their Master, go into captivity or death, just as others might.

SECTION II. VERSES II TO 18. THE TWO-HORNED BEAST.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

II.—HORNS LIKE: its two horns were like a lamb, *i.e.*, either like a lamb has horns, or like a lamb's horns (as in ix. 10).

12.—DOES: as in the phrase *to do his will*. The full force of this 'doing' may be well seen in St. John's own words (John vii. 17; v. 30).

IN FRONT OF IT: as a High Priest of the worshippers, or, more likely, as its own agent. Compare the seven spirits of God in front of God's throne (iv. 5); or John Baptist 'great in front of the Lord' (Luke i. 15); or, perhaps, Zacharias and Elizabeth, 'righteous in front of God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord' (Luke i. 6): but here with the wrong master—with Satan instead of God. There can be no stronger indication of the real Antichrist.

DWELLERS: usually *settlers* in a country for a time, as Abraham in Charran (Acts vii. 2).

14.—IMAGE (A. V. and R. V.). In our Lord's question

about the representation upon a coin (Matt. xxii. 20) the word is used. This is similar to the Latin *imago*; but, as it is not the use of the word *image* as ordinarily understood in English, *likeness* is preferable. The meaning here may perhaps be best realized from a consideration of the meaning of the same word in Rom. viii. 29, where it doubtless includes likeness both to Christ's moral code and to His future glory.

LIVED. St. John, as St. Paul (Conybeare and Howson, 1852, vol. ii., p. 178), seems always to connect the words *life*, *live* with the thought of triumph over death, or of a revival, as here.

15.—SPIRIT: *i.e.*, breath and life. It is a capital error to picture the spirit of our Bible as an ethereal essence having no solid action. Our own spirits are infinitely less connected with our own actions than God's Spirit in the Bible is.

16.—THAT THEY SHOULD GIVE. Who *they* are is not said; presumably *they* are the people represented by the beast.

Expository Notes.

11.—We now come to the other beast, the ecclesiastical empire, or Christendom, which grew up, not out of the sea, but out of the earth, clothed at once with the attributes and powers of civilization, and with independent imperial organization—an *imperium in imperio*. Its power was split, more decidedly and continuously than any partition or divisions of the empire, into two. Perhaps the Eastern and Western Churches, each an independent ecclesiastical power, are represented by the beast's two lamblike horns; but, more probably, what is meant is the union of paganism with Christianity, like the Medo-Persian kingdom.

Though it does not exercise its destructive powers in war or warlike parade, nor does it have a lion's mouth, as

the first beast does, yet it is not without horns, showing two independent and distinct governments, and it talks as a dragon, or snake, talks. This last refers to the temptation of Eve, which is the only instance of the dragon talking, and leaves the character of his talk to be gathered from that instance, and from the description of the dragon, his name and his acts, which begins at xii. 3. The ecclesiastical pretensions of the second beast meet with all the support of the empire, both before and after the division of the empire into kingdoms. The second beast acts as the officiating priest or ecclesiastical support *in front of* the secular government of the first beast, in whose territory it acts. In return for its appointment to this office, this ecclesiastical power, or church, *does* support the secular government, and diverts people from the service of God and His commands to the service of the state and its policy. This is an illustration of the war which the dragon is waging with the seed of the woman, being embittered with great wrath because it knows that its time is short (xii. 12). The bitterness of this wrath may be somewhat understood from the decisive and uncompromising promises, made by God to those servants of His who conquer, that they should rule more completely over the very territory contended for than the dragon has ever done (ii. 26).

14.—At the same time it must be noticed that, as this vision has developed, the dragon ceases to be an acting figure. It merely stands by, and gives authority and power to the beast. The woman disappears from the scene altogether, whether as being in the wilderness absent from the scene of action, or because ‘her seed’ is replaced by an equivalent term, ‘the saints,’ and as a corporate earthly body has no existence. The vision now relates to the action, not of heavenly beings, but of men, who carry out the war between the invisible powers of the woman in the wilderness, representing the spiritual life of

God's servants, and of the invisible dragon on earth, representing Satan.

The likeness made of the first beast may refer to the likenesses of the emperors which were set up and worshipped in every town in St. John's day. It was usually a statue. The refusal to worship one of these likenesses by offering a handful of incense upon its altar was very generally the test upon which, during pagan persecutions, a Christian was tortured and executed. Subsequently the whole array of Papal images, pictures, and relics, which were invented not in the image of God, but in that of secular policy, by the second beast, were so far sanctioned by, and adopted into, the system of the secular kingdoms of the first beast, that the worship of them was taught by State endowment and laws, and enforced, as a matter of State policy, by confiscation or death.

16.—In another figure this false outward worship is called a *mark*, or *stamp*, distinguishing those with whom the votaries of the image were allowed to trade and associate freely. The *number* may be that of the word *Latin*, as spelt in Greek, the letters of which, as used in ordinary Greek notation of St. John's time, correctly total 666.

A MARK: see comment on vii. 3.

18.—A MAN'S NUMBER: so xxi. 17, 'a man's cubit,' and Is. viii. 1, 'with a man's graving tool,' meaning the number as in ordinary use for marking cattle or slaves. For branding it was obviously convenient to have the number obtained by adding up the numerical value of every letter in a man's name, rather than the name in full, it would be almost as short as initials, and would stand as evidence of ownership at law far better, as it would be better than any arbitrary mark where there was no legal register of such marks. In Greek, every letter of the alphabet had its numerical value, not so in Latin.

SENSE: perception combined with intelligence, *nous*.

NOTES ON CHAPTER XIII.

1. *THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FIRST BEAST.*

The first beast comes, like Daniel's four beasts, out of the sea, in a form already invested in the attributes of all Daniel's beasts; and its horns, the kingdoms who divide its power, are seen already crowned with fillets. Probably the description of it, as it stood in the vision, embraces its characteristics—united or successive, merged and assimilated, or still in embryo—during its whole existence, past and future, including the killed and fallen heads. All the men, embodied symbolically in this beast, sank their religion before the power of the empire, or kingdoms; and those who promoted that power (xiii. 4, 5, 6, etc.) joined in the blasphemous homage done to it. By defining and enforcing a blasphemous and boastful religion with a view to effect their own exaltation and their exercise of Satan's power and authority, the *whole earth* attacked, or set aside, God. The result was that the first beast conquered all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's scroll of life; none cared to stand out, and to refuse homage to the power and influence around them, except those to whom God was a living reality whose will they wished to do. Of these, says St. John, few, if any, will be able to escape slaughter or captivity, or treatment tending that way; and in meeting such unavoidable trials their patience and faith as saints will produce conspicuous occurrences, even a sufficient evidence to all who have eyes and ears, and who allow their eyes and ears to see and hear simply.

This first beast has this unquestioned authority from the time of St. John, about the time of the overthrow of Jerusalem, for twelve hundred and sixty years. This ends about the time of the dawn of the Reformation, when the seed of the woman acquired a name in politics ('Lollard,'

burnt at Cologne A.D. 1315), and the first honest translation of the Bible into any vernacular idiom of modern Christendom was published (A.D. 1380; Wickliff's translation of the Vulgate Latin Bible into English).

If we take the commencement of the authority of the first beast, as it appeared to St. John with its ten horns crowned, we may perhaps place it at the death of Charlemagne, 250 years after Belisarius, at the beginning of the ninth century. The killing of the seventh head must have taken place before the horns sprung up, and is a distinct occurrence from the origin of the ten kingdoms. Perhaps the change of the empire from pagan to Christian in the first half of the fourth century is of sufficient importance to be represented as the rise of the seventh head. We may take the beginning of the existence of the crowned horns, of the Pope, and of the authoritative and universal neglect of the Bible, and the concealment of the Gospel, at about A.D. 800, and the end of twelve hundred and sixty years from that time at about A.D. 2060.

But, as in the case of the Lamb who was seen 'as if slain,' so the symbols united in the beast merely give its complete character. Some of the events directly represented by the symbols, like the ten horns in Daniel's vision (Dan. vii. 7), may be anticipated, and some, like the body, feet, and mouth of the first beast (ch. xiii. 2), may refer to events long past. Hence, neither the existence of the ten horns, nor the slaying of the head and revival of the beast, can be taken with confidence to fix any date. The inspired description of the action of the beast is the safer guide.

2. *THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SECOND BEAST.*

The second beast has two horns, uncrowned. Whether this refers to its being divided into two independent churches or powers, as all other horns in the visions of Daniel and St. John do, or not, it seems clear that the

aggressive fighting power of this beast is not of the kind of the crowned kingdoms of Christendom ; and that, however exercised, it is exercised under an apparent identity with the Lamb, *like a lamb*. Of division of power into horns there are two classes in Daniel. In the case most like this beast—the only one in which a beast appears (in his vision) at its entry with more than one horn (Dan. viii. 3, etc.)—a ram appears with two horns, which signify (Dan. viii. 20) the united kingdom of Media and Persia. It is said that the highest of these came up last, apparently before the appearance of the ram. In analogy to this vision of the Medo-Persian empire, we should interpret the two horns of the second beast as the combined powers of political paganism and political Christianity, freed from all incumbrances of superstition on the one hand, and of religion on the other, such as should hamper the acquisition and exercise of political power, culling from both paganism and Christianity all that could be made effective for those purposes. The first beast merely spoke against whatever in religion seemed dangerous to its supreme *authority* (verse 7) or military power, and went so far as to order torture and death to those who refused even a slight act of homage to the gods as established by law. This action of the first beast has continued, more or less, through every phase of religion from St. John's days to ours.

The second beast is more malign : he not only makes war with those who seem dangerous, but unscrupulously employs deception, falsehood, influence, and social excommunication to force or draw men from paying homage to God, and into professing homage to the likeness of the beast (verses 13, 14). While professing to be the infallible channel for expressing God's will, and the infallible teacher of what is in God's sight right or wrong, and while making a show of miraculous signs in support of this profession, it sins by leading men away from the simple record of God's Word, and from an intelligent, child-like attention to

God's guidance ; it bends all its influence to induce submission to the likeness of Satan's empire. This two-horned beast represents the Papacy as the most prominent example of all similar cases of pretension and blasphemy. Though these have been only too prevalent, in a less striking degree, amongst religious churches, from the largest organization of the Romish Church to the smallest sect of recent times, wherever a trusted leader leads his flock astray by some successful 'hit,' forsaking his simple Gospel message to burn incense to a social or political demon—to the prince of some wealth or influence he hankers after, or as an invocation to heads at some election.

This conduct of the second beast, compared with the paganism of the first, was downright devilry—talking like the dragon—compared with mere blasphemy. This conduct, as well as the origin of the second beast, and the following description, apply directly to the Papacy only, and do not fit any other church, however much the Papacy may be representative of similar conduct appearing in other forms elsewhere. The second beast makes all people worship the imperial kingdoms. The Papacy accepted the patronage, and made use of the military and civil powers of the rulers of Christendom. It set up or supported emperors and kings with all the influence of its creeds, anathemas and dignitaries, used in support of policy or war, and especially by commanding all princes to use violence and bloodshed in order to enforce religious conformity. The Papacy endeavoured to make honour, conscience, hospitality, and all fear of God yield to force. History records instances of this in the Crusades against the Mahommedans in Asia and Christians in Europe ; also in numerous savage and treacherous murders, and wholesale robbery and slaughter, promoted and blessed by the Pope. In Christendom, so far as its own tribunals could be extended, the Papacy delivered to the first beast for torture and execution all who served God, or even read His Word.

CHAPTER XIV.

ORIGINAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

- 1 AND I saw ; and, See ! the Lamb standing upon the
hill Sion, and with him one hundred and forty-four
2 thousands having his name, and his Father's name,
written upon their foreheads : and I heard a voice
out of the heaven, as if a voice of many waters, and
as if a voice of great thunder. And the voice which
I heard was as if of harpers harping on their harps :
3 and they sing as if a new song in front of the throne,
and in front of the four animals, and of the elders ;
and no one could learn the song except the one
hundred and forty-four thousands who are purchased
4 from the earth. These are they who did not wallow
with women : for they are virgins. These they who
follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These were
purchased from men, a first-fruit to God and to the
5 Lamb ; and no falsehood was found in their mouth :
they are blameless.
- 6 And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven
having eternal glad tidings to announce upon those
who are seated on the earth, and upon every nation
7 and tongue and people :—saying in a loud voice,
' Fear God, and give him glory ; because the hour
of his judgment is come : and salaam to him who
made the heaven, and the earth, and sea, and
fountains of waters.'

- 8 And another, second, angel followed, saying, ' Fallen
—great Babylon is fallen, who has made all the
nations drink out of the wine of the wrath of her
fornication.'
- 9 And another, third, angel followed them, saying
in a loud voice, ' If any one salaams the beast and
its likeness, and receives a mark on his forehead or
10 upon his hand, he also will himself drink out of the
wine of the wrath of God, mixed pure in the cup of
his anger, and will be tortured in fire and sulphur in
11 front of the angels, and in front of the Lamb: and
the smoke of their torture goes up for ages of ages;
and they have no pause day and night, who salaam
the beast and his likeness,—and if any one receives
12 the mark of his name. Here is the endurance of
the saints:—those who keep the commands of God,
and the faith in Jesus.'
- 13 And I heard a voice out of the heaven, saying,
' Write, " Blessed are the dead who are dying in
the Lord from this present moment ": " yes," says
the Spirit, " that they will cease from their labours,
for their works follow along with them. "'
- 14 And I saw:—and See! a bright cloud, and seated
upon the cloud (one) like (the) Son of man, having
on his head a gold crown, and a sharp sickle in his
hand.
- 15 And another angel came out of the temple crying
out in a loud voice to him who was seated on the
cloud, ' Send thy sickle and reap; because the hour
to reap is come, because the harvest of the earth
16 is ripened.' And he who was seated on the cloud
threw his sickle upon the earth; and the earth was
reaped.
- 17 And another angel came out of the temple that
is in the heaven, having also himself a sharp sickle.
- 18 And another angel came out of the altar, who

has authority over the fire, and called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, 'Send thy sharp sickle, and gather in the bunches of the vine of the earth, because its grapes are exactly
 19 ripe.' And the angel threw his sickle into the earth, and gathered in the vine of the earth, and threw
 20 into the great winepress of the wrath of God: and the winepress was trodden outside the city; and blood came out of the winepress up to the bits of the horses 1,600 stadia off (about 184 English miles).

THE MESSAGES OF THE ANGELS.

SECTION I. VERSES 1 TO 5. THE HEAVENLY MUSIC.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

1.—HAVING. This word is feminine, agreeing with 'thousands.'

WRITTEN. Though this word originally means *graven*, or written with the sharp point of a style on a smooth waxen tablet, it was used in St. John's time just as we use the word *write* with style, pencil, chisel, or pen. St. Paul (*e.g.*, Gal. vi. 11), and others, freely use it of writing with pen and ink: especially St. John uses the word in this sense (2 John 12; 3 John 13).

2.—VOICE: or sound. The Greeks spoke of the voice of the instruments. Matt. xxiv. 31; Rev. i. 10; just as they would of the *voice* of the singers, whether they could hear the words or not.

4.—Purchased *from* men: in the exact sense in which a man may be said to go to a market, and select, or purchase, and lead off with him six horses *from* a mob in the market, or *from* the market.

Expository Notes.

1.—This vision of the Lamb standing upon the hill Sion seems to continue the vision either as following the

description of the two beasts, or as an episode, in either case, representing what occurred during the twelve hundred and sixty days of the operations of the two beasts—things invisible and incredible to the inhabitants of the earth.

The scene is on the hill Sion, representing something on actual earth; and the one hundred and forty-four thousands, sealed on the symbolic earth of Christendom (vii. 3, etc.), are there. We may not take *Sion* as being literally Sion in Palestine, any more than we may take Babylon, Rome, Sodom, Euphrates, etc., literally. It seems to represent the religious foundation of the place of meeting of God and His saints, while the woman was in the wilderness. This foundation we may call Christ (I Cor. iii. 11), or faith in His message. It is a symbolic picture, in harmony with the other symbolism of these visions, of exactly that truth of which the 'tabernacle' was a typical construction, in harmony with matter-of-fact human worship. The hill appears in the vision without any expressed connection with either *the earth*, or its *heaven*, so that it is *not* a locality in the world; nor does it represent any body of people recognised in Christendom (*the earth*), nor any body of rulers and guides recognised by the states of Christendom (*the heaven*). The Lamb, and the one hundred and forty-four thousands alike, represent those who have been, are, or will be in the world, but not of the world, as the Lamb Himself, reported by St. John, says (John xvii. 11, 14-17). These one hundred and forty-four thousands were the Father's (John xvii. 6)—had His name on their foreheads; and have been given to the Son, and have His name on their foreheads. Our conceptions of earthly empires, in which power depends on the enforced allegiance of subjects of a mere day, and in which the enjoyment of power depends on the perpetual struggle of the rulers to mislead and coerce their subjects by excessive violence, fraud, and blasphemy, are com-

pletely dwarfed by this short description of the select body of one hundred and forty-four thousands of Christ's eternal kingdom. All have been sealed by the spirit of life, and have had the spirit's life in them while on earth; and *that* spiritual life is the only part of their life recognised here. The message of the glad tidings is that even while saints are in the flesh, subject to sin, Christ will give them a life, the breath of the spirit; and that is, of course, blameless, as they are here shown in Christ's presence. As for the sinful flesh, Christ answers for it. He stands there in the character of the lamb slain, just as in the typical Mosaic temple the lamb was slain as an atonement, admitting the worshipper to approach God. The one hundred and forty-four thousands learn a new song. They hear its roar as wide as the dashing of the sea, as loud as the roar of thunder—the song of the glorified saints on their harps. The harp was the Jewish instrument of praise, whether in private retreat or public holiday.

We are apparently told by our Saviour (Matt. xxiv. 30) that immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem, and at the time during which earthly secular powers were being obscured or cast down, the sign of the Son of man would appear in heaven; and He would be seen Himself coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. The last words of St. John (Revelation, last verse before the blessing) are his solemn affidavit that the Lord Jesus is coming quickly. It must strike any reader that in the three preceding visions we have missed Him altogether; no sign of Him on earth is shown. But in this fourth scene the lamb is shown upon the hill Sion. Christ's presence, as here represented by the lamb, is not directly seen either in earth or in its heaven; but He is really present amongst His saints. The one hundred and forty-four thousands represent the true servants of God upon earth; and, though on earth, they have their

distinctive standing ground on Mount Sion, the ground of God's covenant and presence. The permanent closeness of the Lamb to His saints is more than is indicated by our Lord's presence with His professing worshippers (Matt. xviii. 20), and is described more clearly in His promise as recorded by St. John (John xiv. 23) as His abode in each saint, with which it has a specific connection in the names of both Father and Son written on the foreheads of the one hundred and forty-four thousands. His presence is a reality to His saints; and so is the song of their departed predecessors; but neither the song of the harpers, nor the sight of the Lamb, are perceptible to any except to the purchased and sealed. These, however, can learn it, and do join in singing it. These purchased on earth are *a firstfruit to God*, perhaps as having the firstfruit of His spirit (Rom. viii. 23), and not being the ripe fruit they will become when their body shall have been released and restored. These are not only free from the harlotry of the gilt and scarlet woman, but are purely and faithfully waiting until they shall be perfected in marriage as brides of Christ. This very virginity of mind is a firstfruit, to be consummated by marriage. We have still to be shown in the vision what action and effects occur on earth, concurrently with the Lamb and His band on the hill, such as will show to all, from east to west, the presence of Christ, as it were in a cloud. It is first important to remark, that no temple appears here on the hill Sion. It would be very unlike St. John to omit it, and leave it to be assumed as a matter of course by each reader.

SECTION II. VERSES 6 TO 12. THE MESSAGES OF THE
FIRST THREE ANGELS.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

6.—FLYING: there is no indication that he flew with wings.

GLAD TIDINGS, or *Gospel*. What the word means we shall best gather from studying our Lord's own version of it. He, of all men, knew what were the glad tidings. He Himself told John's disciples (Matt. xi. 5) that He had been preaching it, and Matthew has given us a very full record of *what* He had been preaching, which may be supplemented from the Gospel of John himself and others; and our Lord's version of the *glad tidings* is in harmony with that of this angel, here given in brief. We must not confuse the term *glad tidings*, or *Gospel*, in the New Testament with our modern meaning of it. We use it, like Acts, as the name of a book, or of the events and discourses contained in the book.

7.—SEA. There is not the usual article before *sea*, as if, in this case, to throw both sea and fountains into the class of *waters*.

10.—MIXED PURE. See viii. 7, note, designedly prepared and offered, and prepared with perfect justice, and impartially.

TORTURED. See ix. 5, note.

11.—AGES OF AGES. This is the only place in which St. John omits the articles, everywhere else it is *the ages of the ages*. Here one of the three oldest MSS. does read *ages of the ages*, and another an *age of an age*. It is clear that St. John did not apply to the vision of the mystic Babylon exactly the same phrase which he uses for the devil and his angels (xx. 10), and for the servants of God and the Lamb (xxii. 5).

Expository Notes.

6.—We should expect that our Saviour's last command (Matt. xxviii. 19; and to Peter, John xxi. 15-17) to make disciples of all the nations, teaching them to keep all His injunctions, and His last command to Peter to feed all *His sheep* and lambs, whether in or out of Christ's fold (our Lord in John x. 16; and John in John xi. 52),

would be commands considered by Him of vast importance—indeed, of primary importance to the nations. Accordingly we are not surprised to find such teaching of the Gospel put here, first of the signs of the Son of man's presence, in a cloud, visible to all nations. This angel's message is akin to St. Paul's to the nations, then Gentile idolaters at Lystra (Acts xiv. 15): 'We bring you good tidings, that you should turn from these vain things unto the living God, who made the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and all that is in them . . . and . . . left not Himself without witness, in that He did good; and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness'; and to the Epicureans and Stoics at Athens: 'What you worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you. The God that made the world,' etc. The sign thus illustrated in a vision to St. John must represent a far greater publishing of the Gospel to all tribes, people, and languages of the world than St. John himself had witnessed; the vision would represent no sign at all of the hour of judgment being come—it would not be a sign, unless it were something marked and extraordinary, such as if foretold, would seem miraculous. Such a spreading of the Gospel has begun, in our time, by the aid of printing, steam, and peace, through men whose hearts have been touched—some to devote their lives to the immediate work, and others to organize the machinery for carrying the work out, and to contribute substantially towards the necessary cost.

8.—The next declaration of the second angel is the fall of Babylon. The Babylonian element of secular government is recognised in the first beast by its lion's mouth (Dan. vii. 4). It remains to consider what that element is which is to *fall*, as described; and in the search for this, the fuller description of Babylon's fall in the eighteenth chapter helps us much. It is of importance,

too, to bear in mind the notions of government, and of public and private property, which prevailed in Greece and Rome at the time of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian empire, in order to contrast them, and to form some idea of what was specially characteristic of Babylon. No doubt, afterwards, both Greece and Rome, at the time of their conquering the Eastern countries, and of including Palestine in their empire, appropriated and acted upon these Babylonian notions.

It will be enough to confine the comparison to Rome and Babylon. During the Babylonian empire, and long after, the government of Rome and the enrolment of her armies was popular, and the slightest approach to despotism was fatal to the power of anyone who attempted it. Even the possession of landed property was not absolute, and was altered and revised at the wish of the people. It was not till Rome was becoming the mistress of the world that the head of the State assumed despotic power. Since that time the head of the empire, and of the kingdoms into which it has been divided—whether coming into power by the management of his (or its, if the head be a body of men) predecessors, or by his own ruthless stratagems and daring, or by universal suffrage of the army, or by any other way—whether called emperor, king, president, prime minister, or cabinet, or council, or house—has, from the first accession to power, at once assumed all, or most, of that despotic power which in the time of the Babylonian empire distinguished it from Rome.

There is another trait distinctive of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar, her most representative king, soon after rebuilding the city, and the great temple of Bel in it, set up a gold idol, ninety feet high and nine feet broad, close by the city; he used all the force and temptation in the power of the State to make every Jew occupying a high position in the public service worship this image in the

most public manner. He used force to establish his religion.

We cannot tell how deeply this fall of Babylon will affect the first beast. It is true that, in past cases, Assyria, Persia and Greece were successively overthrown; and the ruin of the first is predicted by Isaiah in very strong language, and, so far as actual Babylon itself is concerned, has been literally complete. Yet they were not so destroyed but that St. John is inspired to include them all as existing in the symbol of the empire of Rome (xiii. 2) — a symbol which in his visions represents the Roman empire of the then coming time. This angel proclaims the fall of Babylon; but the first beast still remains, in the next verse, apparently much the same in temper and action as before (verse 9).

If we read St. John's prophecy in chap. xviii. in the light of Isaiah's (xiii., especially verses 19-22), which has been so completely fulfilled by the destruction of the actual city of Babylon, we see that St. John foretells in that chapter as complete a destruction of mystic Babylon as Isaiah does of the actual city. Chapter xviii. introduces Babylon as a symbol.

The kind of fall of Babylon declared by this second angel must then be the fall actually begun when the angel spoke, and so begun that the completion of it was certain and, as it were, within sight; as when our Lord says (Luke x. 18), 'I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven,' where the word *beheld* is an imperfect, implying a continued watching, as if to mean, 'While you seventy were on your mission, I was beholding Satan fallen from heaven.' Neither the preaching of the Gospel to all tribes nor the fall of Babylon would take place in a day. The power of Babylon exhibited itself in destroying and transplanting nations, as if they were herds of cattle, without any right or claim; the working of them at enforced labour, carrying bricks, etc., many miles to build the

immense works at Nineveh or Babylon; the enforced service and mutilation of officers of state; the control of all wars, property, power, life, and freedom by the State. All that remained of this in Christendom was fallen, or doomed to fall.

There is no doubt that the decline and fall of this Babylon, visible to all men, can be traced in history as taking place during the whole time of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, and during the whole time of the preaching of Christ's Gospel. Perhaps the first great fall, due to the great spread of the Gospel in the first three centuries, and to the continual decay of the pagan empire during all that time, was when the empire under Constantine renounced paganism. That emperor found that he could not hold the empire together on the old footing, with the idolatrous soldiers and government of the old pattern, so he had to Christianize his army and State. Lower and lower the power and grandeur of the empire fell, until the different kingdoms were partitioned off, and the remaining Greek emperors became a kind of tinsel court, into which a French count did not hesitate to come to pay a half-contemptuous call of honour, accompanied by his wolf-hound. As to the old Roman citizens, their evidence in the courts of law of the more powerful kingdoms was excluded, as unworthy to occupy time or unable to carry weight.

The fall of Babylon, in the mystic sense, was not like that of the kingdoms of Assyria, Persia, and Greece, by conquest, and by the absorption of their empire into the empire of the conqueror. The mystic Babylon gradually falls, without a successor, having become impossible under the light and ideas derived from the Gospel, as preached and expounded amongst every tongue and people. The falsehoods mixed up with this preaching were intended to act the other way, and to strengthen, and almost deify, Church and State; but so much of real truth was

published as made political and religious despotism a fallen power, believed in by none, hypocritically vaunted by some, carelessly assented to as a cry for political and social purposes occasionally.

Then, after the empire's dismemberment, the despotic control of subjects, and of conquests by the chiefs, has, by irregular degrees, declined. The control itself has been vastly reduced; slavery, enforced ignorance, control of occupation, have dwindled away, and what control the State now exercises is in some degree checked by the number and conditions of those exercising it. The fall is very far from perfect, as the knowledge of the Gospel by all the world is very far from complete; but both have visibly advanced, and are advancing, and it may be reasonably hoped will advance, something like *pari passu*. A similar tense is used, therefore, for both the coming of judgment (verse 7) and the falling of Babylon (verse 8). The light is come to all, which determines those who love light and those who hate it; the despotism of State omnipotence is fallen. This means that the one is on its way to become universal, and the other to vanish totally.

9.—The best comment on the third angel's declaration is found in the history of Christendom. So much has State policy been stamped with the mark of the beast that hardly any prominent statesman has had a European reputation based on his having taken innocence and righteousness as a sufficient guide. Perhaps it would be right to say none; for if some have striven for justice and avoided guilt, it is not *that* on which their historical reputation rests. The Popes, as well as others, have professed to be guided by pure motives, while acting in a way inconsistent with such professions. Indeed, the whole history of the Middle Ages is a history of scheming for control and of spoliation, and of the apprehension of war, preparation for war, and execution of war necessary for carrying out or resisting such schemes. The continual

torture of the subordinate classes, produced by the restrictions and coercion and unrest needful in the preparation for war, and by the bereavement and suffering inflicted on them in the execution of war, is visible to all men; but it is so much a matter of course that historians avoid recording it wherever it has no direct bearing on the all-absorbing struggles for or against aggrandizement. This torture in fire and sulphur, *i.e.*, by the just destruction of that on which they depend for support, and in which they place their happiness and glory, is most clearly recorded in the history, where it affects the dominant classes. They have not often led easy and happy lives. From St. John's days up to recent times striking instances of this torture may be found; but torture, and not the complete destruction of the service of the beast, is here foretold. This fiery torture of those who worship the beast will yet be made more strict and perfect, administered in the cup of wrath unmixed with mercy or hope. Whatever this torture will be, it will be such as to satisfy the consciences of all the angels of heaven and of the Lamb, as if the whole formed one unanimous jury. The judgment is given, the case decided, the sentence enforced, and the case is over for ever. There will be no more delay, no remission, no appeal. The smoke of this burning away of all the position, powers, and anticipations, or what not, of their earthly life of worship to the beast will go up, like the smoke of a burnt offering, for ever, beyond this present age. There seems to be in this vision of punitive torture some reference to the Mosaic burnt offering, which was kept burning for ever; for the whole imagery of the burning requires complete consumption—not like heated metal, but like the burning of the impure parts of the sacrifice, the smoke of which is repeatedly called a sweet savour unto the Lord (Exod. xxix. 18) of a whole burnt offering. On the altar of burnt offering the fire was never allowed to go out

(Lev. vi. 9, 12). Of the sin offering and guilt offering, the priests ate in the holy place all that was not burnt (Lev. vi. 29 ; vii. 7). No doubt the offerings were chiefly a type of Christ. The whole burnt offering might be directly so ; the sin and guilt offerings could not be so, for they were not all burnt, but only a part, which rendered the rest holy—a condition which could not be a type of Christ, but rather of the worshipper, whose sin is forgiven and himself justified when he offers himself wholly to God. Both sacrifices may be alluded to in this description of fiery torture. The torture is not a sacrifice, of course, but a judicial punishment ; and the allusion may mean that the suffering of Christ for the sin of others is a measure of the suffering of persistent sinners for their own sin, and that the whole self-sacrifice, in which the Christian submits all that is amiss in him to destruction in the fire, assures to a sinner that *he* will not be favoured by more lenient treatment.

SECTION III. VERSES 13, 14. THE VOICE AND THE SPEAKER.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

13.—WORKS : or *actions*. We here gather clearly what constitutes the essence of *good work*, or *works*, as frequently used in the New Testament. Whatever it be, it is such that it will follow us to heaven. To some who despise good work done on perishable solid material, as being a low, and to those of proper spirit and wisdom, degrading occupation, suited to grovelling earthworms, to such not only old Abraham and Sarah's (Gen. xviii. 6, 7) divinely honoured work, and our Lord's (Mark vi. 3 ; Luke ii. 51), but St. Paul's positive advice (1 Cor. vii. 20, etc.), are all condemnatory. They still need to consider and learn the truth of the old legend on Staffordshire pots, applicable to all earthly work, and workers :

‘Erth I am, et es most trew ;
Disdain me not, for so be yew.’

14.—UPON THE CLOUD: exactly the same preposition is used for sitting *upon* a throne (iv. 2); sitting *upon* a horse (vi. 2); standing *at* a door (iii. 20); standing *at* the four corners of the earth (vii. 1); and for an angel standing *at* the altar (viii. 3). The word, therefore, is used for other meanings than *upon, on the top of*. As we speak of coming *upon* a friend in the street, or of a man having his shoes *upon* him, in English idiom, so, yet differently, we find the Greek word used when it cannot mean *on the top of*. If the clouds upon which the figure was seated were of the sort in which God came on Sinai, or on the Mount of Transfiguration—if those were (as we should expect) typical of the same event as that here symbolized—we should not say *upon*, but *in*. We talk of coming *upon* a fog; and also of a fog coming *upon* us; this illustrates how cautious we need to be in putting too definite a meaning to the Greek preposition.

SICKLE. In Greek the name for any cutting tool having one edge, and curved; in war a scimitar, or sabre; in mowing, a scythe; in reaping, a sickle; in vine-dressing, a pruning bill. The language used (verses 15-18) about *sending* and *throwing* it is inapplicable to the literal instrument, and indicates that some other agent, of which the sickle is a symbol, is in the thought as well as the language of the writer.

Expository Notes.

13.—But a voice out of heaven declares a special message from God; it may be the voice of the Son of man upon the cloud (in the next verse), and is attested by the Spirit; but it is more likely that of angels heralding Him.

The scene of this episode is still on earth, and its earthly heaven. The vision still, like Daniel's visions of

the beasts, etc., is showing symbols of history, in special connection with the war between Christ and His spiritual Church, and Satan and his angels. The time seems to be approaching when the kingdom of the world is to become our Lord's, and His Christ's (seventh trumpet, xi. 15); for already the Babylonian element in the nations of Christendom is become as miserable and contemptible as the kingdom of the Israelites after the fall of Jerusalem under Titus. The Holy City has ceased to be trampled on by the nations. This voice out of heaven seems to come just before the kingdom of the world is to pass to our Lord and His saints, and is to reassure those who have died in the Lord that their labours will now be left behind, but their works will follow them. Perhaps it is difficult after excessively hard labour, maintained to effect some much desired end, to determine whether the greater immediate pleasure arises from the rest, or from the accomplished work. The earthly lives of Christians had been no more guaranteed (xiii. 10) than was their fair and honourable treatment guaranteed while they lived on earth; but here a voice is heard guaranteeing them both blessing and rest in their death, and that their works will follow them. We have a familiar example of what this means in the case of our Saviour. Speaking metaphorically, our Lord says (Luke vi. 40): 'A disciple is not above the teacher; but everyone fully instructed will be as his teacher'; or, as elsewhere (Matt. x. 25): 'It is enough for a disciple that he should become as his teacher, and the slave as his lord.' Our Saviour's words directly apply to the treatment and resistance His disciples must expect on earth, and we may be sure that the one half of the simile does not hold, and the other fail. His saints, as they laboured and endured like their Master in life, will rest, and be followed by their works, like Him, after death.

It is true that even on earth His works followed Him

in two ways. First, during His life, His twelve disciples, and great multitudes besides (Matt. iv. 25), attached themselves to Him. And, after His death, His Apostles and His churches have carried on His work. Those who will die in the Lord will cease from their labours, but their works will not cease even on earth. Such occupation and power as will bear fruit in good work will not die with their death, but will still live to carry on the object and hopes of their lives on earth, as their Master's did.

14.—As God the Father showed His presence, in a shining cloud at the transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 5), by a voice, so the Son of man appears in the vision seated on a bright cloud, crowned as a king. The angels which have appeared in the earthly heaven have been invisible to earthly eyes: as we read of angels of revelation (i. 1), angels of churches (i. 20), angels of waters (xvi. 5), so we have angels of proclamations—all are God's invisible agents. It is, therefore, in harmony with the symbolism that the Son of man is invisible when He comes, on a cloud, to take up His kingdom in the earthly heaven, amongst the rulers and guides of men. But, of course, the cloud represents something visible, which indicates His presence. He has in His hand a sharp sickle, which evidently means some earthly executive agency. Joel (iii. 12, 13) uses similar symbolism, in which the nations are gathered, as it were, to battle (as here they are fighting the battle of the devil and his angels) against God's people; and they (or possibly God's people) are challenged to put in the sickle, for the vintage is ripe, and to tread the winepress. Moses, in his prophetic song (Deut. xxxii. 41), describes God as using a sword for national judgments; and God's use of His sword is described by Isaiah (xxxiv. 1-6) to show that it represents human war, which is human agency.

It seems almost a matter of course that this appearance

of the Son of man in full royal estate, crowned, and with a sharp scimitar or scythe in His hand, with the means and with the purpose to immediately gather out of the confusion and scorn of the earth all the wheat—all who have not received the mark of the beast—needs a proclamation, such as was usually given by heralds before a king. A metrical proclamation David sang before the ark. A proclamation was shouted before the Son of man Himself, on His entry as King into Jerusalem, by children and by the multitudes. The preceding verse (13th) seems to be this proclamation, spoken by angels, who might well have been in the bright cloud, brightness being so much an accompaniment of angels. This proclamation seems to complete and supplement that of the multitudes who heralded our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, and especially that of Zechariah (ix. 9), 'Behold, thy King cometh,' etc. It seems also to refer to the fearful event of our Lord's crucifixion, which so soon followed His former entry; for it proclaims a blessing to those who have died in Him, *i.e.*, trusting in Him; and it affirms that the blessing is to be realized from that moment. The Son of man is seated on the cloud, as if in a state of rest, awaiting instructions to act.

SECTION IV. VERSES 15 TO 20. THE MESSAGES OF
THE OTHER THREE ANGELS.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

15.—TEMPLE. As before, this is the covered part of the temple: the holy and most holy place, seen by St. John standing in the immediate neighbourhood of the durbar, or court, in heaven.

Expository Notes.

15.—These instructions are sent him out of the temple. No temple has been mentioned in this series of visions;

and the only one within sight of St. John is that in the heaven of God's throne. The instructions are brought expressly to the Son of man by an angel. Christ, while on earth, implied that He waited for such, when He said (Matt. xxiv. 36): 'But of that day (when all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; and He will send forth His angels with a great sound of a trumpet; and they will gather together His elect, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other)—of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son' (see also Mark xiii. 32), 'but the Father only.' We may add that the time at which these instructions will be sent does not seem to have been revealed to anyone since.

The instruction given the Son of man is to 'send His sickle, and reap'—an unusual expression as applied to a sickle, but evidently literally acted upon; for the Son of man does not leave His place on the cloud, to go and use the sickle. It is like Jehovah's language as given by Isaiah (x. 5, 6) speaking of the Assyrian as the *rod* of His anger, and the *staff* of indignation: 'I will *send* him against a profane nation,' etc. Whether the imagery makes the Assyrian the rod and staff, or makes him the bearer of the rod and staff, is doubtful; and so here it seems enough to understand that by some agency, actuated by some impulse from heaven, the harvest will be reaped. What it is that was reaped is not stated, but is perhaps explained by the parable of the wheat and tares (Matt. xiii. 24): the wheat is the object; but the false wheat—those who profess and simulate Christianity in Christ's field—will be reaped together with the true; and the *reaping* implies all the processes of threshing, winnowing, sifting, or whatever is needed for the complete result—which is, to get the true wheat harvested. Thus might come the condition of the world proclaimed by great

voices from heaven, in the seventh trumpet, when the kingdom of the world will become our Lord's, and His Christ's.

So far as we know, prophetic *reaping* never requires, though it may often involve, the passage of a soul through *death*—the falling asleep, or going into the grave. Nor can we take our Lord's parabolic description of the wheat and tares growing together as intended to enlighten us on what happens *after* death, until some harvest to follow thereafter; we know that the growth of the wheat and tares is a symbol explaining phenomena of this life, and cannot be pressed to apply to the souls of the dead awaiting judgment. The prophetic reaping, then, applies only, as is said in verse 15, to the harvest of the *earth*. The reaping comes as the closing scene of the war, not of flesh and blood, but of the regenerate against Satan and his empires.

It is in harmony with the prophecy of John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah (Matt. iii. 10), that '*already* the axe is laid to the root of the trees,' etc. At the close of the Mosaic dispensation, and of the old covenant, there occurred this hewing down on earth of the trees which failed to bring forth good fruit. The prophecy was fulfilled by the turning of the Apostles to the Gentiles; by the obliteration of Jerusalem; and by the contemptible burnt-up condition in which the descendants of the writers of our sacred books have lain ever since. There is, of course, no similarity in the purpose and result of the *cutting down*, and *reaping*, in the two cases.

There is no mark of human war or bloodshed in the description of the reaping; yet the wheat will clearly cease to grow on among tares, or to be trampled by the nations, and further growth must be by a new culture and sowing, either of all the wheat as a church collectively, or of each grain singly, or both. In the grape vintage we have blood (verse 20); but none in this wheat harvest. If it involve

war, the war is so little an essential part of the harvest, that it is not mentioned. We cannot tell how far the order to reap is general, and how far it leaves the details to the Son; but, as the mind of the Father and Son are at one, we may feel sure that the time is chosen with a loving interest for the wheat, and is so executed as to gather in each ear of wheat in the best condition. Whatever be the interpretation, every true Christian is cut and gathered in this world by his Saviour's hand, under his Saviour's eye—the Saviour who quitted heaven, and lived and died on earth, for him. The sorting of the tares from the wheat does not come into this vision, which is, therefore, necessarily silent as to the destination of what is here reaped.

17.—Another angel, making the fifth of the vision, and the seventh appearance—if we include Satan's two beasts—came out of the temple in heaven with a sickle. He is the second angel from the temple, and has no place on any cloud on earth. To him comes an angel from the altar in heaven, under which, in the fifth seal, the souls of those slain for the Word of God called for judgment and the avengement of their blood. This third heavenly angel, the sixth in the vision, has authority over fire (verse 18), *i.e.*, he is authorized to use that purifying judgment which purges away dross, or consumes what is temporary and unsound; and at his bidding the second heavenly angel 'sends' his sickle, cuts and gathers the grapes, and throws them into the winepress of God's wrath. The angel does not tread the winepress, but it is trodden outside the city—the city of xi. 2, the mystical Jerusalem, which had been trodden by the nations forty-two months; not *the great city* of xi. 8, the mystical Babylon. Wine is meant for men to drink; but from this winepress blood runs so copiously that horses could readily drink from it two hundred miles or so from its source. This figure may be got from the aqueducts and

artificial streams erected by the Romans at every considerable city, in which a copious supply for drinking purposes flowed at convenient 'fountains' by the roadside; and the waste, useful for cattle or land, flowed away in open conduits. The sufficiency of a supply for all kinds of roadside or domestic purposes might be described by such a standard as this: there was plenty for a horse to drink from it. However that may be, it is clear that ample and reassuring proof of the vengeance taken on the 'grapes' would be spread over an ample country.

Contrasting the two harvests, we notice that the first is a harvest for gathering in the grain, and freeing it uninjured from dirt and husk, for its own benefit and security, and for storing it in the best condition for living and germinating. It is gathered from a desire to have it, and to make it fit to perpetuate its highest and most extended usefulness; and this reaping the wheat leaves the grapes unaffected. On the other hand, the second is a harvest in which the grapes are gathered to be destroyed for the sake of their juice; but the juice of this vine of the earth is not wine, but blood, *i.e.*, its life, totally unfit for casking and storing; allowed to run to waste, not vatted. Its value lies in its being the destruction of the grape, the overthrow of those who have overthrown the world.

NOTE TO SECTION IV.

THE SEVEN ANGELS (chaps. xiii., xiv.).

Before passing on to the last series of seven angels, it is essential to notice the general character of the seven angels described in chapters xiii. and xiv., which refer to the war between Michael's angels and Satan's angels upon earth. They are not numbered *seven*—Satan's and Michael's—as if they belonged all to one set; but Satan's *two* are numbered; then *three* angels follow in mid-heaven, numbered; then come *two* symbolic groups,

in each of which is (1) a figure with a sickle; (2) a messenger who declares when the time comes to use it; and (3) a sickle, which is thrown from heaven to earth, and executes the reaping of harvest.

The explanatory visions show the dragon, Satan, who is not an actor in the series of earthly scenes; the woman, who is also withdrawn, to the wilderness; the Lamb also withdrawn, on mount Sion.

The points which constitute an *angel* agreeably to the scenery of these visions seem pretty clear. An angel in charge of a movement seems to symbolize *animus*, or temper and wit combined. For instance, Ahab, tempted by evil *spirits*, fell into the *temper* and behaviour, which resulted in his death by a chance arrow. Europe, just now, is in such a temper or *animus*—one of Satan's, by-the-bye—that, say, fourteen millions of people, working so hard and under such conditions as to amount to distress, and physically worse off than an Egyptian slave, help to maintain fourteen millions of their most able kindred in unwilling idleness, merely drilling in the art of mutual annoyance. That might be symbolized by an evil angel.

Perhaps every one of the twenty-eight millions involved objects to the habit, or arrangement, or organization, or whatever we may call it, which goes on existing before the man is born into it, and after he has died out of it; accordingly, the symbol used for it is not a man—except only in the case of our Lord, the God-man, and the Woman His bride—but a superhuman figure, if good, an angel; if bad, a monster. This is in harmony with the artistic conceptions of all the highest artists of the Middle Ages. We must not suppose that either beasts or angels are real creatures; they are symbols.

CHAPTER XV.

ORIGINAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

- 1 AND I saw another sign in the heaven, great and wonderful, seven angels having seven plagues, the last (plagues), because the wrath of God is completed in them.
- 2 And I saw as if a sea of glass mixed up with fire ; and those who conquer out of the beast, and out of his likeness, and out of the number of his name, standing upon the sea of glass having harps of God.
- 3 And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, ‘ Thy works are great and wonderful, Lord, the almighty God. Thy ways are just and true, the King of the ages.
- 4 Who (is there who) will not fear, Lord ; and (who will not) glorify thy name ? Because (thou) only (art) hallowed ; because all the nations will come and salaam in front of thee, because thy righteous dealings appeared.’
- 5 And after these things I saw ; and the temple of the tent of testimony in the heaven was opened ;
- 6 and the seven angels who have the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in clean bright linen, and girded round their breasts with gold
- 7 girdles. And one out of the four animals gave the seven angels seven gold saucers, full of the wrath of God who lives for the ages of ages.
- 8 And the temple was filled with smoke out of the

glory of God, and out of his power; and no one could enter into the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished.

THE SONG OF THE VICTORS.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

1.—PLAGUES: literally *blows*, or *strokes*, especially in fighting or in castigation; used in such phrases as to strike the first blow, to strike blow upon blow. It is used of a *stroke* of lightning, of an axe, of a sword, of a boar's tusks, of clubs; and metaphorically as a stroke of God, or a heaven-sent plague. Such were the *plagues* of Egypt.

2.—MIXED: that is, the sea *ready mixed*; not in the act of being mixed.

OUT OF: scarcely *out of the struggle with*, but a mixed meaning, beginning with that of *out of the men composing the beast*—those who go through the temptations of Christendom conquerors; and passing to mean those who successfully avoid being stamped with the *number*.

UPON. This preposition is used alone in Greek, where in English we should prefix the word *close*. Thus, *standing upon the council chamber* is said in Greek, where we should say *standing close upon*, *i.e.*, close to the door (see note on xiv. 14).

3.—SONG OF MOSES. As in the expression, *Psalm of David*, this should mean song composed by, or under the direct instruction of, Moses. It seems generally considered to mean a song in thorough practical sympathy with Moses, as expressed by 'Moses' song' (Exod. xv.), danced and sung by Miriam; and with the last touching song, if it may be so called, in the minor key, but of anticipatory triumph (John xiii. 31; xiv., etc.), spoken by our Lord in His trouble (John xiii. 21) on the last

evening of His last advent. They are three metrical likenesses of the same subject, taken from three very different points of view.

TRUE. In the headings of this song, and throughout this book, we must remember to give the full force of the Greek to this word : *consistent with truth, or real and true.*

4.—GLORIFY : *to credit, and to give practical expression of support and honour.*

HALLOWED : *holy* in reference to God, as *just* is in reference to human laws ; *pure and reverent.* It is a word used of God (in Acts ii. 27), etc. ; of a Bishop (Tit. i. 8) ; but *not* in the Lord's prayer (Matt. vi. 9, etc.). In xvi. 5 God is praised as both *just* and *hallowed.*

5.—TEMPLE : here applied to the tent in the wilderness ; as apparently in I Sam. i. 9 ; iii. 3.

TESTIMONY : a *witnessing evidence.* That in the 'ark' (Exod. xxv. 16) seems to have been the two tables of the law, as they were given by God to Moses. Similar, but never given that name, were the omer of manna (Exod. xvi. 33), and Aaron's rod (Numb. xvii. 10), which were kept in the most holy place.

6.—HAVE. An interesting illustration of St. John's style : they had not got them yet.

THEIR. The Greek here is *about the breasts* ; we should say *about the breast.* In order to preserve the accuracy of the Greek (since both the angels and girdles are in the plural) without ambiguity, I have changed *the* into *their.*

Expository Notes.

1.—These seven plagues are clearly stated by St. John to be the last. This must mean the last to be shown of some set of troubles and plagues, about which the vision hitherto has treated. Any future plagues (such as xix. 15, 16) will belong to another set, or another age. There seems therefore no choice but to include, not only these plagues, but the preceding vision of the war between

the angels of Michael and of Satan, within the set of visions hitherto shown to St. John in heaven. God had pledged Himself to His Son (for instance, in the inspired poetical figures in the second Psalm, and especially of Ps. cx. 1, confirmed by our Lord's quoting it Himself, Matt. xxii. 44) before He begot Him into the world that He, God, would carry out a momentous contest, to complete conquest; while His Son should sit awaiting that completion, and the time when the Father would place all on earth under His feet to be ruled by a staff of iron. That contest is the grandest and most eventful in its results of any we know of, or can conceive. The first coming of Christ was revealed to the prophets in many aspects. It was described as the coming of a King of Israel (Zech. ix. 9), of God's servant (Is. lii. 13), of a sufferer (Is. liii. 3), of the angel of the covenant (Mal. iii. 1), of a preacher to the poor or meek (Is. lxi. 1); and the circumstances and results of the Messiah's advent were shown in, one may say, numberless lights, by type and metaphor. We cannot, then, be surprised—nay, we might well be surprised, if it were not so—if St. John describes this conflict, and final subjugation of the devil and sin in the world, in at least as many aspects as we find he has. We have already had his vision of (1) the natural economy established during this conflict, with an episode showing the number sealed, protected, and purified, throughout it; (2) the evil passions and destructive acts which would characterize the politics and aspirations of nations, under the malign rule of Apollyon himself, with an episode on the political state of the outer professed Church, trampled on by the nations, and a remarkable and carefully accurate exclusion from politics of the true spiritual church—of the true worshippers—for twelve hundred and sixty years; (3) the seven thunders, indicating the existence of an immediate voice of God, and, if we may so say, of His personal guidance, but not allowed

to be revealed to us; (4) the spiritual war carried on in heaven, while the spiritual church is in the wilderness, resulting in the dragon—Satan in the guise of earthly empire—being cast down from heaven to earth, where he makes war with the rest of the woman's seed; (5) then follows a continuation of Daniel's vision of the four beasts, showing the changes through which earthly empire would pass, in its hostility to the Messiah, in its blasphemous usurpation of a kingdom, in being universally worshipped in preference to God, in its first accepting and then enforcing this worship, and in its designedly counterfeiting the position of a god. While this earthly empire is in force is shown the war between the angels of Michael and those of Satan on earth, with an episode symbolizing the spiritual life maintained behind these scenes. So we may consider the vision of the seven plagues as the sixth of the series, with an episode on the fall of Babylon. In that fall—the fall of empire—the Church takes no part; *its* history seems sufficiently evident in that it stands while Babylon falls. The Church never sought to take Babylon's place; nor is its earthly victory promoted by war, further than so far as its protection requires violence to be met by violence, and destruction by destruction, and iniquity by judgment and punishment—as, in fact, is clearly shown in these visions.

The nature of the seven plagues, or strokes, is indicated more distinctly than that of the seals and trumpets. No doubt the whole, from the first seal inclusive, tended towards the final victory of God, and the final placing of all the kingdoms of earth under the feet of His Son; but these plagues exercise a more immediate influence on the supreme and complete rescue, with victory, of God's Church on earth. Instead of souls of slain crying for vengeance below the altar (vi. 9), or the prayers of saints laid upon the golden altar (viii. 3), we have here the triumphal songs and melodies (xv. 3), composed by

Moses, and led off by Miriam, as of the rescued Israelites on the Eastern shore of the Red Sea; not merely is there rescue, there is also victory (xv. 4). As the Israelites on the Red Sea felt that rescue from Egypt ensured victory over the nations of Canaan, and as, in fact, only forty years in the wilderness separated them from victory, so the seven angels are heralded by souls of victors, singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, and glorifying God for that He only is acknowledged holy, and is worshipped by all nations. The time of the woman's retreat into the wilderness is, as it were, forgotten, and the song only celebrates the salvation and the victory, the cross and the crown.

St. John first describes the scene on which the seven angels appeared. It is in heaven, where are the glorified saints; but the throne, and He who is seated on it, and the seven lamps, are not mentioned. Instead of the glassy sea, like crystal, is a glassy sea mixed with fire. Howsoever the fire was there, whether flashing in the glass, or in the water, or in both, the indication seems to be that the whole of the members of the court in chapter iv. were pure beings, who required no purging of a destructive kind (Is. i. 25; Ezek. xliii. 25, 26; Mal. iii. 3), such as is associated with fire, and of course involves judicial discrimination, in order to be fit for their official duties in heaven; whereas, in this case, the assembly of the conquerors of the beast on earth had need of purification by fire, as well as water, before admission to heaven. These conquerors have harps of gold, the symbol of glorified saints; and they alone sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, heralding the coming of God to the kingdom of the world. No others join in it.

5.—The seven angels are seen coming out of the holy place and the holy of holies, which are now united in the tent, or tabernacle, in heaven. Presumably the temple is now seen in the vision, in the shape in which it stood

in the wilderness: the spiritual life of the Church on earth has already been represented as being in the wilderness during the operation of these angels (xii. 6), or, at all events, during a part of the time. They are seen coming out, 'having' the seven plagues; but this seems to describe them by anticipation, for the saucers full of the wrath of God were given to them afterwards, not from the temple, but by one of the animals. It was somewhat so with the trumpets, which were seen to be given to the seven angels standing before God (viii. 2). It may be inferred that the plagues which the saucers contain will operate solely by natural action—by things created, and by the laws of their creation—as if the devils and men who seek gratification by defiance of God, and by indulgence in earthly fancies, would be shown by these plagues to bring themselves to judgment, while merely supported, under the natural laws, in their own aspirations and mischief.

6.—The angels are in robes of priestly white, dazzling, and girded with pure gold, ready for their priestly duties of pouring libations. The saucers are such as were used by priests to dip into larger vessels, to pour libations from them, and so to hallow the whole. The temple was filled with smoke, perhaps embodying a complete remembrance of the prayers of the saints (viii. 4), and evidence of the presence and approval of God in His ruling Providence, not yet clearly unveiled and explicable. During the plagues all the usual worship in the temple was suspended, as it was at the opening of the tent (or temple) in the wilderness (Ex. xl. 34, 35), and of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings viii. 10, 11). It was from this cloud of smoke that the great voice came, ordering the seven angels to pour out the seven saucers. It was, in the above cases, the consecration of the temple, which God had taken into His own hands; and in this case of the seven plagues, it is the consecration of the spiritual

temple of His saints, the execution of which He is Himself carrying forward, while the Church, like the Israelites at Pi-hahiroth, is to stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord (Ex. xiv. 13, 14). It was from the temple that an angel had appeared (xiv. 15) ordering the Son of man to reap the harvest of the earth. In each case we must infer that it is God Himself who gives the time or season for action.

CHAPTER XVI.

ORIGINAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

- 1 AND I heard a loud voice out of the temple, saying
to the seven angels, 'Go, and pour out the seven
saucers of the wrath of God into the earth.'
- 2 And the first went away, and poured out his
saucer into the earth: and a bad and painful sore
occurred upon the men who had the mark of the
beast, and who salaam to its likeness.
- 3 And the second poured out his saucer into the
sea: and blood, as if of a corpse, occurred; and
every soul of life died—the things in the sea.
- 4 And the third poured out his saucer into the
rivers, and fountains of waters: and blood occurred.
- 5 And I heard the angel of the waters, saying, 'Thou
art just—the Being and the Was, hallowed—because
6 thou didst judge thus; because they poured out
blood of Saints and Prophets, and thou hast given
7 blood to them to drink. They are worthy (of it).'
And I heard the altar, saying, 'Yes, Lord, the
almighty God: thy decisions are true and just.'
- 8 And the fourth poured out his saucer upon the
sun: and it was given to it to scorch men with
9 fire; and men were scorched with great heat, and
blasphemed the name of God who has authority
over these plagues, and did not repent to give him
glory.
- 10 And the fifth poured out his saucer upon the

throne of the beast: and its kingdom became dark-
11 ened; and they were chewing their tongues out of
the pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven out of
their pains and out of their sores; and did not repent
out of their works.

12 And the sixth poured out his saucer upon the
great river, the Euphrates: and its water was dried
up, that the way of the kings (who are) from the
sun-rising might be made ready.

13 And I saw out of the mouth of the dragon, and
out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth
14 of the false-prophet, three unclean spirits, as if frogs
—for they are demons' spirits doing signs, which
pass out upon the kings of the whole inhabited
15 day of almighty God. 'See! I am coming; as if
a thief. (He is) blessed who is awake and keeps
his garments—that he may not walk naked, and
16 they look on his discomfiture.' And they (the un-
clean spirits) collected them into the place called in
Hebrew Harmagedôn (Mount Magedôn).

17 And the seventh poured out his saucer upon the
air: and a loud voice came out of the temple from
18 the throne, saying, 'It is done.' And there occurred
lightnings, and voices, and thunders; and a great
earthquake occurred, such as never occurred since
a man occurred on the earth—so much earthquake,
19 so great (as this). And the great city came into
three parts; and the cities of the nations fell. And
Babylon the great was remembered in front of God,
to give her the cup of the wine of the wrath of his
20 anger. And every island fled; and no mountains
21 were found: and a great hail, as if of a talent (a
cwt. avoirdupois) weight, descends out of the heaven
upon men; and men blasphemed God violently out
of the plague of hail, because its plague is great.

THE WOES OF THE SEVEN BOWLS.

SECTION I. VERSES 1 TO 7. THE FIRST THREE BOWLS.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

1.—SAUCERS. The Greek word never means a *vial*, nor *phia*, but a *flat shallow bowl*, used for drinking or for libations. As that is the common meaning of our word *saucer*, it seems best to translate it so.

2.—OCCURRED : *came*, or *happened*, or *came into existence*. Perhaps the nearest colloquial English is *came to be*. *Arrive* is naturally nearer to the meaning than *occur*, but would read still more awkwardly.

SORE : a festering wound, especially a poisoned one, or an abscess. Luke xvi. 21 is the only other place where the word is used in the New Testament. It occurs in the LXX., Exod. ix. 9, etc.

PAINFUL : *wicked*. Of men this word means *oppressed by toil*, *sorry*, *bad*, *depraved*, *wicked*; of things, *painful*, *troublesome*, *good for nothing*.

3.—SOUL OF LIFE : used in the LXX., Gen. i. 30, to apply to every living thing, including man, as 'having in itself a soul of life.'

4.—RIVERS AND FOUNTAINS, ETC. It is quite possible to translate this 'into the rivers and fountains of water' (*i.e.*, both rivers and fountains were of water), 'and it (the water) became blood.' The 'it' is not expressed, as it would be in good Greek, but as likely as not would be omitted in St. John's more colloquial style. It is not possible so to translate either of the similar sentences in verse 2: 'it' (the earth) 'became a painful sore,' or verse 3, 'it' (the sea) 'became blood.' It is only the accident of *water* being neuter in Greek that renders it possible here (contrast viii. 8, where the noun *sea* is

repeated ; while here there is not even a pronoun, as a nominative to *became*).

5.—JUDGE THUS: or, perhaps, *didst judicially decide these things*.

7.—DECISIONS: or *sentence* ; but used also for a *trial*, either at court or of skill.

Expository Notes.

1.—The plagues of Egypt were sent in order to show Pharaoh and the Egyptians and others that Jehovah was the Lord (Exod. vii. 17; viii. 22; ix. 14, 16). The object of these plagues is not stated ; but it seems to be the convincing and converting of those on whom they fell—to convince the inhabitants of the earth that their own ways were evil, and so to clear their minds for that change which would lead them to become grateful and willing subjects of God and the Lamb.

2.—*The first plague.* The first saucer was poured upon the earth—Christendom. It produced a sore, which would cripple the free action of those on whom it fell, and would render repose and action alike uneasy and painful. We find that all governments, including the Pope, have set themselves to do this, not only by taxing and impressment, but by enforcing wars, controlling customs and dress, and by arbitrary direction of trade, religion, and writing. The sorer people are, too, with the more arbitrary assumption, Governments habitually worked upon the sore, and made it spread ; so that, what with armies and navies, debt, retaliatory tariffs, and precautions against desperate tumult, poverty has often been driven into want, and want into crime ; capitalists into inactivity, and inactivity into deception ; ignorance into superstition or revolution, and superstition or revolution into cruelty ; and so forth.

3.—*The second plague.* The second angel poured out his saucer into the sea. If this refer to the unorganized

nations or peoples brought into contact with the nations of Christendom, it would apply especially to the time since the Reformation. It would mean their disorganization, moral and physical deterioration, and final extinction; or such an absorption by means of serfdom or slavery, as to destroy their independence under compulsory organization. The vision seems to give only too true a symbolization of the actual effect of 'civilizing influences' on unsettled tribes, in contrast with the effect of our Lord's last mission to preach glad tidings to them and baptize them. But the sea may also include schools of learning, guilds, freemasonry, unions, and all such embryo organization as would, in sacred prophecy, constitute the storm-tossed sea out of which the great empires rose (Dan. vii. 2, 3); all these have suffered some severe crushing under every form of government in Christendom; and the complete extinction of all is an eagerly desired goal, considered necessary to ideal perfection by the extreme advocates of State rights, of all schools.

4.—*The third plague.* Taking the rivers to represent that which feeds and supports the springs of each man's will and mind, we follow the analogy of the stream from the rock in the wilderness, which rock represented Christ; and of Jacob's well, which our Saviour paralleled with the water which He gives, which springs up in each man who has it unto eternal life. We gather that, under this plague, the springs of men's life, the spirit which is acting in each, gets fed wholly or partly on blood, instead of pure water. The chief sources on which the spring of men's lives and actions were fed for many centuries were supplemented, or wholly supplied, by the Romish Church, by the rules of war and chivalry, by the fancies of minstrels and Troubadours, and by civil laws and customs; and these were not only bad at the best, but were sanguinary in their codes of rules and in their final

appeal. They also were lifeless, and of this world only. Even personal worship of God was decried amongst great and small, rich and poor. Personal religion, agreeably to the teaching of all the then accepted authorities, was left to the priest, and was purchased from him, to be put in action after the purchaser's decease. Much of this still continues. In public justification of conduct, the expressed motives of statesmanship, of national war, of religious instruction, and of civil law, are rarely based upon the faithful love of God and man; but distinctly upon the final appeal to violence and blood.

This plague was poured upon the rivers and fountains of waters. In xvii. 1, after this vision of the plagues is over, the harlot is described as seated on many waters; not described as being either river or sea, but appropriate to the irrigated country about Babylon (Jer. li. 13), or elsewhere (Numb. xxiv. 7; Ezek. xix. 10). However, there the interpretation is given (xvii. 15): 'the waters where the harlot is seated are peoples and crowds, and nations and tongues.' Again the phrase *many*, or *great*, *waters*, not particularly applied to rivers nor fountains nor sea, is used as a figure of either troubles (Psa. xviii. 16), or enemies (Isa. xvii. 13). Also Ezekiel in a vision, when brought to a city in a very high mountain in Israel, and posted at the east gate, hears the voice of God coming from the way of the east, as the sound of *many waters* (Ezek. xliii. 2). This last might refer either to the sea, or to land-floods; if the latter they must be violent, since irrigation from channels makes no sound to be heard from a distance. It is clear, then, on the whole, that there is a total separation between the figure of 'many waters,' conceived as either sea, flood, land irrigation, or cloud, etc., and the figure of 'rivers and fountains of water.'

5.—We may therefore treat the *angel of these waters* with considerable confidence, as akin to the angel of xiv. 6, who brought the everlasting Gospel to all on earth, to

furnish, as it were, the springs of eternal life to all who should receive it. *He*, too, spoke as this angel of the waters does; but his words were the Gospel call (Matt. iii. 2, 10), such as had again and again been repeated by our Lord, His forerunner, and His followers. This angel of the waters does not address the earth, but God; and it is not in praise of His treatment of the saved, but of His treatment of the punished. He praises the justice of God, who always was hallowed. He who was in His divine existence spotless and holy has now exhibited the justice of His laws by the way He has judicially decided these things; for that is the meaning, and, as likely as not, the truer rendering of 'didst judge thus.' This judgment varies from the letter of the Mosaic law, upon which the prayer of the martyrs in the fifth seal (vi. 10) seems based; yet that it fulfilled that prayer fully in effect is clear both here and in xix. 2. The punishment is here described not as slaying them to avenge their slaughter of the saints, but as giving them blood to drink; referring to our Lord's sacrament, but undoubtedly including the actual shedding of blood. In our Lord's sacrament His own blood is that actually shed; in this case they shed each others' blood. In admiration of the justice of God displayed in this mode of vengeance, the angel concludes, 'They are worthy of it.' And so they themselves thought, and so we think? Fair fight—whatever was settled to be, and accepted as, fair—by sword or spear, truth or falsehood, torpedoes or bribery, was, and is, considered to end the matter worthily to both parties. There is no other worthy way of ending it at present, as men's wills and minds have been fed.

7.—It is an awful and miserable punishment on civilized Europe that it is so; and the martyrs under the altar are fully satisfied that the judgment is a true and real one, as well as abstractly just (vi. 10).

SECTION II. VERSES 8 TO 11. THE FOURTH AND FIFTH BOWLS.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

8, 9.—MEN : literally *the men*, *i.e.*, mankind in general.

10.—THRONE : none has been mentioned for the beast. The word was used for any chair of state—of a king, a school teacher, or a bishop.

11.—OUT OF. The same preposition, governing the same case, is used three times in this verse. In the first two cases it refers not to place or position, but to origin ; as we say *a thing was done out of friendship*. In the third case it is more doubtful. A man may repent owing to his seeing the evil results of his works, or owing to the suffering they bring him. His works originate his repentance ; and he may be said to repent *out of* (the experience he has of) his works. St. John, in this book, is the only author who uses repentance with this preposition ; and he uses it, apparently, as a change of mental position, which no doubt includes change of mind and opinion, and of consequent action, *out of* one class of things to another (so ii. 21, probably ; ii. 22, as here, doubtfully ; ix. 20, probably ; ix. 21, probably). But, in all cases, what seems looked for is, that the sinner should repent out of experience of his evil works, from disapproval of their results ; and the two helps granted him are time (ii. 21), and evil consequences (ix. 20). Special punishment, of the nature of chastisement, seems reserved for those whom God loves, with the object of checking their sins, or of stimulating their virtues, and, in either case, of bringing them to seek his ready assistance.

Expository Notes.

8.—*The fourth plague.* In former visions we have seen the darkening of the sun (vi. 12 ; viii. 12), so that the earth

did not get above half the benefit which the sun should have given, and would have given as God originally appointed it. Instead of lack of benefit, there is here infliction of evil, and this St. John sees symbolized: the actual infliction of terrible evil due to abuse, and excess, of power in the rulers of nations. So far as history indicates, the kings or governments of the earth have always *scorched* according to their power, and that power has increased through the times of associated tribes, feudal kingdoms, and representative democracies. Wherever religion, God, and righteousness have been most set at nought, and the beast has been the authority most unreservedly worshipped, there the greatest heat, and the most violent and hopeless scorching, has naturally followed, as opportunity, or selfish passions arose. And as the supreme rulers have obtained their power, more and more of it, directly from the people, *he* (or they, if more than one) has scorched the more; and, in proof of this, these people have the more cursed God, and His ordinance of kings as by themselves perverted. This scorching is not to be estimated by comparing the amount of taxation per head, by comparing ordinances enforced under one set of circumstances, and upon a people holding one set of ideas, with those enforced at other places or times for which the conditions were different. The degree of scorching must be measured by the degree in which it was felt by the people to be directly inflicted by government.

10.—*The fifth plague.* In xiii. 2 we learn that Satan gave the earth that animus, that temper and mind, which placed the first beast upon a throne in the exercise of authority, and constituted kingdoms of which he could say, and, it appears here, in a sense truly, ‘To Thee will I give all this authority, and the glory of them: for it hath been delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship before me,

shall all be thine' (Luke iv. 6, 7). Our Lord could not accept this offer, and His Church has remained in the wilderness twelve hundred and sixty years, because it could not accept such an offer; and the Church of Christ is to share a kingdom with Him, not by ultimately accepting this offer, but by waiting till God renders helpless these Satanic kingdoms. Even now the stone is growing and breaking them up (Dan. ii. 34). Christ and His Church will together (ii. 26, 27) break up the disunited and incoherent residue of these Satanic kingdoms with a staff of iron. On this throne of the beast, or, as we should say, on the governing and governed in every power in Christendom in its widest sense, the fifth angel pours out his saucer. They become darkened. The glory and authority of the governors, and the freedom and welfare of the governed, are alike wrapped in darkness; and, instead of seeing any way out of their difficulties, such as do not repent chew their tongues with pain, and the more they increase their own distress the more they blaspheme God for maintaining them in the power and hardihood to torment themselves.

Hence we see that in addition to the increased scorching heat given out by the sun—by the various governments (verse 8)—there is a simultaneous weakening of its light and power of guidance for any good purpose. The most striking effect is to increase the work, and the taxes, and restraints, and all that causes the sores of the first plague. This has, perhaps, never been worse than in our own day, and before the population of the world has doubled (say, in sixty years, at twelve per cent. increase every ten years), it seems likely to be much worse. For a century the cleverest statesmen have been successfully considering how, without exciting ruinous resistance, they may best tax everything which the very poorest human being has to use, every fund from which

spring remuneration, food, clothing, and all necessaries or comforts, and how they may abduct a man, while strongest and most urgently impelled to work for livelihood, to employ him for unremunerative purposes of State. This is not due to uncontrollable and scorching power simply, for that could be checked, if any remedy were apparent. The characteristic of this plague is the utter inability of anyone to find a remedy. Hundreds of remedies, perhaps, have been proposed; but all theories for improved constitutions of government only serve to darken the air. Even their frequent trial and failure has afforded no light by which the inhabitants of the earth can escape to a government at once honest throughout, under leaders of high practical skill, eager for economy and peace, effectively promoting or carrying out all work desirable for public convenience, judicially securing the rights of rich and poor. It is even unsettled what a good government is *for*, let alone what it should *be*. Yet, so far from turning to a higher power, and obeying the laws of God, the prevailing tone amongst the majority of sufferers has been towards desperately endowing this dark and scorching 'state' with their whole property and lives, and with all teaching of the growing children (under a prohibition of teaching any religion), all without protection or appeal, each dreaming of it as carrying out in the future his own views, instead of opening his eyes to the views of a real and faithful God.

SECTION III. VERSES 12 TO 16. THE SIXTH BOWL.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

12.—WHO ARE. The construction here is different from that in Matt. ii. 1. Those were magi, and the only magi known were those from the East; here, these will be kings; but, of all the kings known over the

world, it is only those from the East who are referred to. This seems a rather uncertain explanation.

13.—UNCLEAN: perhaps rather *uncleaned*. As cloths after other use require cleaning before use for wearing, washing or cooking, etc. ; as a table, after other use, needs cleaning before laying food on it ; and as meat before cooking ; so a man, or spirit, bent on doing anything, must withdraw from doing what is incompatible, and prevents the thing being done. *Unclean* spirits, like 'men of *Belial*,' seem to be loose, worthless beings, which can only be relied on for untrustworthiness and mischief ; so much so, as not to carry out any particular scheme, even of mischief. We may not safely take our ideal of an *unclean spirit* from Milton. At all events, it is certain that, in order to fulfil any law of God we know, whether of art, of justice, or of morality, it is essential to give full purpose to it, and to do it with our might, without diluting our purpose by mixing into it others, or wasting our strength by transferring it to other work. We may not safely take our ideal of *unclean* from the Pharisees ; St. John does not do so.

EARTH. A perhaps insoluble question arises here. As to the form of expression : 'The inhabited,' agreeing with *earth* understood, was a familiar term with the Greeks for *their* portion of the world, excluding all nations outside them—who were called 'barbarians,' *i.e.*, not Greeks—strange to Greek language and manners. Later, the whole Roman empire was included in the term inhabited earth (Acts xvii. 6) ; and, by analogy, the term 'the inhabited' should in our day have been extended to all the world of Christendom, including colonies, tributaries, and dependencies. It *is* (Heb. ii. 5) applied to the next world, in the phrase 'the inhabited (earth) to come.' The question arises, What does this phrase mean when used prospectively in prophecy ? In our Lord's own words, as given by Matthew (xxiv. 14), it includes all the

world—at least all the *nations*, or ‘*Gentiles*’; but there is a slight doubt as to whether our Lord used the word *nations* as His then hearers would understand it, as *Gentiles*, or as it would be understood after the distinction of Jew and Gentile had been done away by Him, at the time of the fulfilment of the prophecy, simply as *nations*. We may be sure that the name assumed by the *Æcumenical Councils*—in English, councils of the inhabited (earth)—is *no* safe guide to the use of the term *inhabited earth* in the prophecies of our Lord, and of St. John. And so there is no certainty that our Lord did not use the word *inhabited (earth)* in the then ordinary sense (as in Acts xi. 28). St. Paul, speaking at Athens (Acts xvii. 31), uses the word in a sense which to his mind might include all mankind, but in his hearers’ apprehension might not. On the whole it may be provisionally translated *world* (and it would be so translated here if it were not that the unexpressed word is *earth*, and could not be *world*, which in Greek is of another gender). The phrase ‘all the world’ is used in English in a restricted sense, frequently, to express the small part of it interested in the speaker or his subject; so even that is ambiguous.

15.—GARMENTS: or *clothes*, much in the sense in which we say, ‘Put on your clothes and come out,’ or, ‘Take your clothes off, now you are come in;’ generally *dress* for outdoor respectability, or *robes* for ceremonial distinction.

NAKED, in ordinary language means in the tunic; of ordinary dress indoors, or for work.

DISCOMFITURE. No doubt the literal meaning is, that he may not walk stark-naked, and people see his nakedness; but the words are used so habitually in Greek in a figurative sense—which is the main, indeed the sole, meaning here—and are so infrequently used in English that a literal translation would hardly convey the true idea.

Expository Notes.

12.—*The sixth plague.* We have here, first described, the effect of the *stroke* or *plague*, as the drying up of the Euphrates; and it is incidentally mentioned that this drying up opens the way of the kings from the East—to Jerusalem, we presume, though it is not here positively stated. A second accompaniment, or effect, of the plague is that the kings of all the earth are collected by three unclean spirits to a war—it is not said with whom; and the reference to Harmagedôn seems only to imply that it is not war against one another, for at the waters of Magedôn Jabin was totally defeated by Israel, and at a *Mount* (if it were Gilboa) Saul was entirely defeated by the Philistines. Perhaps we must infer that the war will be between the servants of God from beyond Euphrates and the servants of the beast; but, at least, that it will be of such a nature, as regards both locality and the manner of war and victory, as has no distinct prototype in the wars of Israel, except so far as that it will be a war between a full muster of all forces; and that it will be a final, or at least decisive, war.

The whole description seems specially rich in allusions to Old Testament scenes. The Euphrates was the extreme boundary from the east, of the territory which God in a formal covenant (Gen. xv. 9, etc.) with Abram gave to Abram's seed (Gen. xv. 18); a promise realized under David (2 Sam. viii. 3) and Solomon. The Euphrates was the boundary between God's covenanted people, and the kingdoms of the East from which they had been called in the person of their forefather Abraham; just as Jordan divided the six condemned nations of Canaan from the invading Israelites under Joshua. The effect of the saucer, then, is to annihilate all the old separation between Abraham's seed and the East. It annuls the old covenant, and places all on an even foot-

ing. With the disappearance of the boundary, the limit to the promise disappears. That is the symbol; and it represents, in the most practical form possible, the disappearance of all the old separation between the Christendom of the old Roman empire, and the other empires and peoples of the whole world. God's anointed servant becomes light and salvation unto the end of the earth (world) (Isa. xlix. 6); and this implies that His enemies also are world-wide.

The action of this plague, as of the others, seems to extend over the whole time from St. John till now. If we include in it the gradual drying up, we go back to the time before Constantine, while Christendom was still in embryo. The boundaries of the Roman world were being dried up, till they already seemed lost as barriers against barbarians. On the one hand Rome was approximating to barbarism. For, during the civil wars, not only Rome and Italy set up emperors elected by the senate, but successively the large province of Africa, and the imperial troops of Pretorian guards, who were chiefly barbarians, had set up emperors. These, being defeated, were rebels, while the provinces, such as Pannonia and Britain, were only saved from rebellion by the success of the emperors whom they set up. The Roman empire had lost much that distinguished it from the barbarians—the nation of soldiers, magistrates, and legislators, who composed the thirty-five tribes of the Roman people, was dissolved into the common mass of mankind' (Gibbon, chap. vii., end, writing concerning the year A.D. 250). Then Persians and Goths (A.D. 269) passed and repassed the old frontiers. The empire began the payment of tribute, or blackmail, to keep them quiet; but, before the end of the fourth century, the Franks of Lower Germany had invaded and ravaged France—then Gaul (A.D. 360). Alaric was recognised as Master-General of Illyria (A.D. 398), and reduced Italy (A.D. 410). The Suevi and

Vandals reduced Spain (A.D. 416). Goths of the Baltic occupied the Crimea, maintained a fleet in the Euxine, and ravaged Asia Minor, Athens, and Greece. All this is enough to indicate that the Roman Empire, when it became Christendom, could hardly be said to have any clear boundary.

But the confusion of territorial boundary, which occurred in its most energetic form between the times of the Emperors Constantine the Great (A.D. 337) and Charles the Great (Charlemagne, A.D. 814), the son of a French mayor, is hardly worth mention beside the complete obliteration of every distinction between Romans and barbarians, such as once existed in favour of the former; whether for offices of Government, for organized force, or for wealth—in all these the Romans were completely overrun by the barbarians. This confusion of races was, however, still of minor consideration to the world, compared with that of which it was the pioneer; viz., the gradual inclusion of the whole world in the Roman Empire—such as is now going on, and such as Christianity has been always working for since the time of St. John. By the comity of nations a favourable reception is given to any nation or colony of the world, so far as it shows itself capable and trustworthy, to equal rights and equal treatment with the nations of Christendom.

13.—The development of the use of steam, electricity, and explosive arms, coupled with the spread of general knowledge, has so nearly dried up Euphrates, and taken away privileges of class or of race, that it only wants an effective spirit to be added to make the union of all kingdoms complete. This spirit is supplied to the worshippers of the beast by three spirits. The Greek word for *spirit* and for *breath*, we should bear in mind, is the same. The devil in his form of the dragon, civilization under the form of the beast, and false religion under the form of the two-horned beast, supply the necessary spirits. Each

supplies one, and each one is represented in the vision as like a plague of frogs ; for, if there were only three frogs, the vision could hardly show them spreading over the whole earth. They are filthy—not only, like the scarlet woman, filthy under a gorgeous outward dress, but outright, in appearance and by profession. This filthiness—the farthest contrast to purity—may mean not only the neglect of the ten commandments, and of all ordinances of God, but an avowed intention to do the opposite to them, to throw all possible contempt and defiance against God, and to teach and allure and terrify men to desert God's ways. The result is that all are gradually collected into a universal war.

There is recorded in Jewish sacred history no great battle in which the people of Israel failed to take part ; and we may be sure that God's people will be engaged, as well as others, in that war. The vision seems to show an actual collection for battle at a certain place ; but the name of that place appears to be a made-up one. It is neither a real place, nor a combination of real names, such as those in xi. 8. There is no result of the collection stated, nor any bloodshed mentioned. St. John records a warning, apparently his own inspired message, or possibly a direct proclamation of the Lamb. It occupies the place of a battle-cry ; but it is not by any means a battle-cry. In it the Lamb applies to His own coming the same figure (but more curtly) which He had used to caution His disciples, as they were discussing privately on the Mount of Olives what would be the sign of His coming, and of the end of the world (Matt. xxiv. 42-44). From that conversation, and from his way of using the same figure more publicly (Luke xii. 37-43) in Galilee, we may be sure that the warning is of a sudden deprivation of some kind, which will attend His coming, and will take effect as suddenly as a thief would snatch the effects of a sleeper. The warning is, in other words, that the day of grace will

be ended; the bad will no longer be allowed to grow with the good (Matt. xiii. 30), nor the barren fig-tree in the garden (Luke xiii. 6, etc.); the mammon of unrighteousness will fail (Luke xvi. 9). It is a warning to repent, or, in other words, to be justified by faith, and to have peace with God, and access to His favour, wherein to stand (Rom. v. 2). It is worth notice that Christ is never represented as armed with any sword but that of God's Word; and with that He is to conquer. This war against the professors of evil spirits seems especially one likely to be waged, by Christ or His servants, with His distinctive weapon—with the Word of God against the word of Satan. We notice, too, that the same powers which had been distinguished by a blasphemous treatment of the true God and His Word now give breath to a spirit of demons; as if blasphemy were become tame and worn out, and to breathe rebellion against God carried more inducement, and were found more in harmony with the prevailing fashion of those who carried the mark of servitude to the beast, than a blasphemous affectation to serve him.

Still, it may not be supposed that the war will end in a weak re-shuffling of the old pack. In the series of plagues it is the temper and mind which are the subjects of the visions, the feeling of soreness under the service of the beast, the collapse or death of all the stir and ambition necessary for the reconstruction of a renewed earthly empire, the lifeless teaching of all schools of thought and policy, worse and worse conduct of State affairs by the governing powers, felt with a scorching heat which seeks relief in despair and cursing; such an acknowledged ignorance and carelessness as to what is best to be done, as is displayed by extreme torture, endured with fierce delirium and blasphemy; and then comes this sixth plague, offering the last opportunity to these distressed inhabitants of the earth. Those who are still hardened

and blasphemous are shown, not singly blaspheming, but collecting in avowed war against God and His people. The vision seems to represent the deliberate and final choice of sides for and against God—the separation of goats from sheep. There the vision leaves it; there is no more to add; the temper and mind of all this collection of men is fixed, and the machinery for dealing with them is no part of this series of visions. But the style of ending of the gathering is unmistakably given us by the heavenly song introducing these plagues (xv. 3, 4). They refer us to the song of Moses, and to the chorus of Miriam (Ex. xv. 1-21).

SECTION IV. VERSES 17 TO 21. THE SEVENTH BOWL.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

17.—IT IS DONE. The same word is used by our Lord (Luke xiv. 22), 'What thou didst command is done'; literally, *is become, has occurred, or has been born.*

18.—OCCURRED. The same word as above.

19.—CAME. Again the same word.

21.—NO MOUNTAINS WERE FOUND. In this, and in frequent similar cases, the literal Greek is *mountains were not found.* This in English idiom leaves a wrong impression, viz., that there were, or might be, any number of mountains, but that they were not found. The meaning is that every mountain was gone, and looked for in vain.

VIOLENTLY. Our colloquial *tremendously!*

Expository Notes.

17.—*The seventh plague.* The air is a new element upon which to draw for a representation. We must be as careful here as in the case of the other elements—fire, earth, and water—already employed, to keep free from all scientific knowledge we now have of air, as a ponderable,

gaseous substance occupying space. Air is the place of action of thunder, lightning, and voices ; it is the pathway of clouds and angels, as well as of birds, demons, etc. ; it is the source of water, hail, and snow, and it is specially in the air that God shows His grandeur and His presence, and declares His will, His laws, and His promises.

After the breaking of the seventh seal (viii. 1) there was silence, as if there were still an action, which would find a place were it possible by the imagery then being used, but one not under the leadership or control of physical laws, and therefore left blank in the series representing the effect of those laws. On the sounding of the seventh trumpet (xi. 15), voices and praise are described as occurring in the heaven where the animals and elders surround the throne ; and the latter thank God that the time is come for destroying the destroyers of the earth. A few words are added (xi. 19) which evidently apply to earth : viz., ‘ there came on lightnings, voices, thunders, earthquake and hail—great ;’ for there could not be an earthquake in the heaven of the throne, nor, indeed, hail. These occurrences under the seventh trumpet follow the opening of God’s temple in heaven. Now, the typical temple on earth, made on the pattern given to Moses by God on Sinai—at a time when that mountain was itself closed against intrusion, at the cost of paying the greatest human penalty, death (Ex. xix. 12)—had two separate veils ; one preserved the mercy-seat from the intrusion of any but the high-priest, the other preserved the holy place from the intrusion of any but priests. Christ removed the former veil by His death, and admitted all His servants to the priesthood, as in the prophetic language of St. John (i. 6). It seems certain that the opening of the temple entirely—the removal of the second veil, as well as the first—could only be done when all outside the temple should be consecrated priests ; and all who were not so consecrated should be exterminated, or driven so

completely away as to leave no possibility of their, in any sense, mixing with the worshippers, or approaching the sacred precincts. Hence the lightnings, voices—mutterings of thunder—uttered in thunder (Ps. xviii. 13, etc.; also Ex. ix. 28, margin), thunders, earthquake, and hail (xi. 19), must be taken as symbols of the machinery put in force to protect the temple from intrusion, effective in exterminating or driving off all unconsecrated persons.

18.—So, when we find the pouring out of the seventh saucer described as resulting in lightnings, voices, thunders, and an earthquake overturning Babylon, and a great hail, all of which were described, almost in the same words, as occurring under the seventh trumpet, we recognise that the means described, and the result which will be obtained, are identical in both cases. They represent occurrences in the human political world and its governments; and with that the symbolism of the trumpets was exhausted, since it had no more to do directly with spiritual matters than the seals. This series of *plagues* goes further. It, as the last and highest of the different series, has specially to do with the spirits or minds* of men, both as affected by physical events, and as guided by evil spirits. The evil spirits are themselves represented in the sixth plague; and we may well expect good ones to be represented also.

Accordingly, all the Old and New Testament imagery indicating the presence of God himself is seen under the seventh plague. From the cloud of smoke filling the temple a great voice is heard; and lightning and earthquake follow. It is an exact repetition of Sinai. At Sinai, God visibly undertook the position of King, Law-giver, and Mediator, of His people. His mercy was

* *Mind* is a word most wanted in the sense used here, which is that in which it is used in the phrases: 'He had a *mind* to fight,' 'He had half a *mind* to run away,' 'I have no *mind* either way,' 'Make up your *mind*.'

not represented there; but that it existed, and was compatible with the claims of His justice, was shown at other times and in other places by the deliverances which He wrought, by the sacrifices which He accepted, and in the writings of the prophets whom He inspired. The imagery of Sinai was a type of the same facts or events as this imagery of the seventh plague.

It is necessary to keep in mind that the earthquake which St. John saw in the vision does not represent a real earthquake on earth, nor the voices real voices, nor the hail real hail. His vision represents real things, nevertheless. No blood is mentioned: but it may be said, that though hail does not shed blood, yet even in some battles the hail has slain more than the sword (Josh. x. 11); but, indeed, the vision seems concerned with the real foundations of all kingdoms; not the mere outward symptoms of their existence, such as territory, crowns, troops, lives, and so forth, but with the spirit or temper in men which alone makes a kingdom possible. Such are misery, dread, despair, greed, pride, habit, luxury, superstition, ignorance; and the fears or hopes which arise in minds, driven onwards before such diabolic influences as the above, acting on their neighbours; or beguiled and misguided by them, acting in their own breasts. We, therefore, expect the fulfilment of the *earthquake*, in what are called men's opinions, including absence of opinion. It has, indeed, already taken a great many shocks to change public opinion from what it was in St. John's day to what it is now. Men's minds have been upset from the then theory and practice of empires and commonwealths, and shaken down, and turned about, on the theory and practice of temporal and spiritual subjection. So that, at the present day, there is in the sky abundant colour foretelling still greater commotions in the atmosphere (verse 17) of opinion; nor can any expect, nor do any profess to expect, that the

result will not fall in physical calamity, like a great hailstorm, on many people. What Nihilists are said to desire, others fear in some form or other—a tremendous hailstorm of commotion, active with what would have been till lately considered fabulous means of destruction; a storm which will entirely break up the old distinctions, laws, financial credit, and religious establishments, of Christendom. The servants of God who seek to do His will may well bless Him, and St. John under Him, for giving them the lead (xv. 3) in a hymn which may well, under such sanction, drive both false fears and false hopes from *their* minds. Whatever their call in life, high or low, political or plodding, military or civil, *they* have refused the mark of the beast: they worship the Lord their God, and serve Him only (Luke iv. 8).

CHAPTER XVII.

ORIGINAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

1 AND one out of the seven angels who have the seven
saucers came, and talked with me, saying, 'Hither!
I will show thee the judgment of the great harlot who
2 is seated on many waters, with whom (the harlot) the
kings of the earth committed fornication; and the
inhabitants of the earth were drunk out of the wine
3 of her fornication.' And he carried me away into a
wilderness, in spirit.

And I saw a woman, seated on a scarlet beast full
of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten
4 horns. And the woman was clothed in purple and
scarlet, and gilt with gold, and precious stone, and
pearls, having a gold cup in her hand full of abomi-
nations and with the unclean things of her fornication,
5 and a name written upon her forehead, 'A secret:
Babylon the great, the mother of the harlots and of
6 the abominations of the earth.' And I saw the
woman drunk out of the blood of the saints, and out
of the blood of the witnesses of Jesus.

And I wondered, seeing her, with great wonder:
7 and the angel said to me, 'Why didst thou wonder?
I will tell thee the secret of the woman, and of the
beast which carries her, which has seven heads and
8 ten horns: The beast which thou sawest was, and is
not, and is about to ascend out of the bottomless pit,
and is going on into destruction: and the inhabitants

on the earth, whose name has not been written upon the scroll of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder, as they look on the beast, that it was, and is not, and is present. Here is the understanding that has skill: The seven heads are seven hills, where the woman is seated upon them, and are seven
9 kings; the five (kings) are fallen; the one is; the
10 other is not yet come, and whenever he should come,
11 he must abide a little (time). And the beast which was, and is not—he also is the eighth, and is out of the seven, and passes on into destruction.’

12 ‘And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten
kings—(kings who did not yet receive a kingdom, but
receive authority, as if kings for one season along
13 with the beast. These have one disposition (of mind),
14 and give the beast their power and authority. These
will make war with the Lamb; and the Lamb will
conquer them, because he is lord of lords, and king
of kings; and those along with him are called, and
chosen, and faithful.’

15 And he says to me, ‘The waters which thou sawest,
where the harlot is seated, are peoples, and crowds,
16 and nations, and tongues: and the ten horns which
thou sawest, and the beast, these will hate the harlot,
and will make her desolated and naked, and will eat
17 her flesh, and will burn her up with fire; for God
gave into their hearts to do his mind, and to do one
mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until
18 the words of God shall have been completed. And
the woman whom thou sawest is the great city, which
has a kingdom over the kingdoms of the earth.’

THE JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT HARLOT.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

1.—ON : is used for *close to* ; as a town is situated *on* a river.

2.—WERE DRUNK. Only used elsewhere in the New Testament by John (ii. 10) in a humorous sally of the ruler of a feast. In neither case does it mean helplessly drunk ; but in both it implies a loss of sense and discrimination.

3.—FULL : as we say a tree is *full* of fruit. It is the beast, not the woman, who is *full*.

4.—PURPLE : probably a *dark rosy purple*.

FULL OF—*with*. Here *full* takes the ordinary case of *abominations* ; but the case of *unclean things* is that which would follow the verb *filled*, as a ship is filled *with* cargo.

ABOMINATIONS : applicable to any *disgusting mixtures*.

7.—WHY : or *at what*.

8.—AND IS NOT ; or, *and there is none*. The angel is apparently enumerating, in order, the different phases of existence of the beast.

FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD. Here, and in xiii. 8, it is not meant that the thing referred to took place at or during the foundation of the world ; but the *from* marks the incident from and after which is the time referred to. *From* is nearly equivalent to *after* : and the same Greek preposition would be used of soldiers arming ' *after dinner* '—in Greek, *from dinner*.

9.—UNDERSTANDING. The Greek word is *nous*, which, if it be reckoned English, is the best English translation of the meaning.

10.—ABIDE : or *continue*.

12.—SEASON. The Greek word is that used for an *hour* ; indeed, *hour* is derived from it, or from the similar Latin word. It means any limited time, especially any of the four seasons of the year, and is used for a whole year,

as we say, *last season*. *For the seasons* means for future time ; but for time of a much smaller dimension than *for the ages*, to express which another word is used.

16.—DESOLATED is used of land turned into wilderness, and thrown out of cultivation ; NAKED, of land bare of trees or of grass.

17.—TO DO HIS MIND. It is very difficult to put faithfully into English the Greek words of broad meaning which are used in prophecy. It does not do to *suppose* one of the meanings to be right, and discard the rest. The Greek word here is used for the mental disposal of things by the exercise of understanding, sound judgment, and will : it is the *mind*, when made up by a thorough determination of what you think ought to be done, and wish to have done. It seems that God supported their strength and courage to do, as He determined they should do, their own mind.

Expository Notes.

1.—The interpretation given by one of the seven angels has one sign of reality about it. A parable, or symbolism, must necessarily be partial. Light is thrown by pen and ink on a group of real or possible actions of a natural kind, or on a group of symbols ; and, assuming the Divine origin of nature and of the symbols, this shows a picture of some higher natural or spiritual action. It is only a parallel or symbol ; the surroundings which would necessarily accompany the parable in real life, or consequences which would follow, were any part of the symbol a real natural being, form no part of the parallel. The higher truth, revealed, extends beyond the limit of the picture ; and its immediate surroundings may be inconsistent with the parable or symbol, as well as with the parable's surroundings. We need only refer to the two parables spoken, and interpreted, by our Lord Himself (Matt. xiii. 2, 19, 24, 37), which have received careful study, and will well

repay it. We find that this angel gives an interpretation more free and extended than that which was given to Daniel; and, in doing so, he rather clouds over or obscures parts of the symbolism. The seven heads of the beast do not satisfy the full conditions of the event: he calls the beast himself the eighth (xvii. 11), and puts the ten horns on the beast (12), whom he leaves without a head. This gives us valuable aid in clearing the interpretation. All symbolism is properly treated paradoxically by prophets and poets, sacred and profane. Thus our Lord Himself is called a Saviour, and also a Judge—things which in their entirety are inconsistent on earth.

This great harlot seems to represent the love of the world, which St. John warned young men to avoid (1 John ii. 15, 16): 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world; and the world passes away and its lust; but he who does the will of God abides for ever.' As the Woman, under whatever covenant, represents the love of the one God, and those born to feel it, so the harlot represents the fitful love of the present moment, and the besottedness of devotion to worldly purposes. She in heart accepts the devil's offer (Luke iv. 6, 7), and worships the devil for any glory and authority which his service will obtain, but under false pretences, and assuming throughout the closest relations to right, and God, that the ideas of the time and her worldly interests require. She is seated on the many waters, as the beasts rose out of the sea; so that the wealth of irrigation, such as was controlled by Babylon, symbolizes the foundation of her power, as the surf of the great Mediterranean, and its immense coast-lines, did the field from which empires sprang. It must be kept in mind that the harlot is not a wife playing the

harlot ; as, for instance, the Jewish Church in prophetic language did (Jer. ii. 20, iii. 1, etc.), and as a Christian Church might (ii. 4, 20). She is a harlot, and nothing else, from beginning to end. She is, in fact, nothing religious, only *anything-worship, world-worship*. She is dressed as a harlot, and her secret is mother of abominations of the earth. The beast she rides, and presumably in some sort guides, is a very suitable one—full of names of blasphemy.

Up to the time of the Papacy all false national religions were idolatrous ; and, up to St. John's time, any union with them by God's chosen people was called, in inspired language, fornication. St. John here uses similar language for *all* kingdoms who utilize, or have utilized, a national religion for secular ends (xvii. 2). Prophetically the metaphor seems to be applied to the anti-Christian idolatrous Papacy—a church which is Christian in name, but actually false and idolatrous. The Romish Papacy, like previous false religions, is founded on many waters, *i.e.*, on her hold upon the law-abiding people, and is adopted and used by all the kings of the earth for upholding their power and luxury.

3.—The seven heads, like the seven mountains and seven churches, lamps, etc., seem to be the taking of seven actual instances to represent completely a whole class, in every form of consistence and action ; and this seems not the less likely, because the seventh head, clearly the last, passes anomalously into the beast itself, which is said to be an eighth. The scarlet colour is distinct from the red of flame (vi. 4), or of fire (ix. 17), or of wine, such as is seen sometimes in pimples or skin eruptions (Is. lxiii. 2, LXX.). The term *scarlet* is used as if for scarlet fabric in connection with silk and linen, xviii. 12 ; and in Matt. xxvii. 28). And there is a special use of *scarlet* when, though applied to material for fabric, wool, it is used as a symbol (Heb. ix. 19) ; so Lev. xiv. 4, LXX., etc.) in cleansing ceremonials. A scarlet thread is used to tie the

brush of hyssop for sprinkling blood. In the earliest times the *scarlet* seems to have been much used as a royal adornment of the 'tabernacle' (Ex. xxv. 4, etc.), and for its tablecloths (Numb. iv. 8); and it seems safest to take it in this case, which is totally apart from any expiatory ceremony, as the Jews and Romans of St. John's time understood it, viz., as the imperial colour. The mountains, or hills, are analogous to Mount Sion, and, indeed, to Mount Sinai, and other mountains visited by God. Mountains were freely recognised in poetry, prophecy, and type, as the appropriate places for religious altars, or temples, or when any specially public and impressive religious ceremony was to be performed; so that a religion seated on a mountain would represent a religion adopted and upheld by a people or state, supported and exercised by an earthly establishment. The royally robed harlot on the seven hills, in contrast to the woman clothed with the sun, in heaven, seems to represent religion set up by men in the name of God, and glorified according to human notions of adornment; and on that support its religious teachers establish a quasi-empire and imperial habit, and for the purpose of obtaining power and dignity, and of indulging their own luxury and pride, use their usurped influence to prevent their supporters from the conscientious belief in God, and from sincere desire to worship Him. The principles of this church betray God, and lead their followers to betray Him; its overseers committed fornication, and led their supporters to commit fornication with them. They violated their own consciences, and induced men to profess to honour God by doing what their consciences told them dishonoured Him.

We know of no empire which did not so use a religion. Seven, perhaps, might be named, as the religions most distinguished in Biblical history, and two or three of these as most distinguished by hostile conflict with God's

chosen people. But the harlot means more than seven or eight particular false churches; and her destruction will represent the destruction of all false hypocritical State religions. Like the Jews of our Lord's time (Matt. xxiii. 34, 35), the harlot accepts the blasphemies of all her false predecessors, and adds to the betrayal of God the betrayal of Christ; she is drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus (verse 6). So, in her judgment, the harlotries of all false religions will be requited; and the idolatrous or anti-Christian religion or religions—whether papal or anti-papal—seated on the then beast, past and future, will have no successor. But her fall will include the fall of all blasphemous accepted religions so seated.

The character of the harlot applies to all such religions. There is the assumption of superiority: she seats herself upon all else. There is her impressive and splendid show. She does little for the people, except to make them drunk, stimulated and bewildered by the wine of her fornication (verse 2)—we may suppose by the tempting and exhilarating shows, the *imposing* penances and indulgences, superstitious claims, and exhibitions, which her unscrupulous pandering for power gives her the means of originating and maintaining. When the people are drunk with her wine, the object of her spurious religion is attained. She is not guided by good faith, nor attracted by righteousness. Her pursuit and enjoyment is the acquisition of power and decorations, the display of the stupid and half-senseless infatuation of her supporters, and the blood of those who do not betray their God.

It seems that both the harlot and her scarlet beast are in the wilderness. This would imply that neither she nor the imperial power she over-rode were such as to make her empress over the earth, nor even to make her empress over the portion of the beast she influenced. Her power

was analogous neither to that of an emperor, nor to that of one of the ten kings. In the wilderness she and her dupes are to fall, as did all the Israelites who were grown up when they left Egypt, but suddenly. She will not be reproved, though it is always open to any number of individuals, or churches, to come out of her, and *not* share in her sins or punishment (xviii. 4). The harlot and the beast are symbols of organizations, not of men. She will end not by being gradually merged into a purified church, but by a separation from the pure church, and a distinctive fall into desolation and contempt, stripped and devoured by her own quondam lovers. And these lovers, too, strip and devour one another; for the destruction of the harlot and beast, under one name of Babylon, seems all of a piece; and the beast, by blasphemously enthroning the harlot and drinking of her cup, was partaker of her sins, and stands or falls into destruction with her, and both will at last disappear from the earth, without revival.

7.—The angel's explanation tells us much. Amongst other things, it identifies the beasts of different dissolving views of the prophet's vision. It tells us that the scarlet harlot was an old existence in the prophet's time, and was then seen seated upon heads (mountains), five of which had long ago fallen. He also makes clear that the seventh kingly head represents a phase of government which fades away and dies, so as to leave the symbolic beast with only horns, and no living head; in fact, the symbol comes to an end, its old form is being broken up; yet it will serve its turn, if we give up its heads, and, as a symbol, accept it without a living head, but with seven fallen heads, and with only living horns.

The furniture of the harlot is partly royal and partly priestly; she has, apparently, the colours of the emperor, and the implements and ornaments of the priest. Out of her priestly golden cup she gives to others what she has

received from them—presumably after enduing it with her blasphemous incantations—and makes others drunk with what has made her drunk. As other religious societies of the heathen world, in St. John's day, had their mystery or secret—usually their ruling notion of the nature of God, and of their particular worship of Him—so she appears (verse 5), with her name or nature written on her forehead as a *mother of harlots*. It was a custom with harlots of St. John's time so to carry their name, or rather some assumed name, on their foreheads. It was as if the scarlet harlot's religion lay solely in accumulating temporalities, whether wealth or credit, by her ecclesiastical assumptions and conduct, no matter how blasphemous or corrupt the means.

The angel's explanation also puts us in the best position for interpreting the beast. It is obvious that it is the same symbol as that in xiii. 1, etc.; or if there still be any doubt, the identity can be seen by referring to xix. 19, 20. The beast seems to represent temporal empire, or government; the moral organization and union framed upon the rational use of temporal means. Allegiance to God and His laws is indifferently used, imposed upon, or put down with a strong hand, as seems best to secure temporal power. In Daniel's vision, a fresh form of beast appears for each successive empire; in St. John's, one beast is seen with seven heads and ten horns, not on any head; but the heads represent successive states of the beast—like the seven ears of wheat, etc., in Pharaoh's vision—and include fallen heads, future heads, and even non-existent heads, until, at last, *all* are fallen heads. Elsewhere, the dragon, Satan himself, is shown visibly acting under the same emblems of seven heads; but on his heads are fillets, or 'diadems' (xii. 3). He is so shown when contrasted with the woman clothed in the sun, and as warring with God and His angels. In the present case, the harlot, as well as the beast, is of earthly

origin, however inspired by Satan; and both represent, first in the Gentile world and then in Christendom, wickedness summed up under various short titles—‘Worship of the devil’ (Luke iv. 8); ‘Worshipping the dragon,’ *i.e.*, Satan (xiii. 4); ‘Worshipping the beast,’ *idem*, and xiii. 12); getting ‘drunk with the wine of the harlot’s fornication’ (xvii. 2)—wickedness which, as in the case of Jerusalem and the Jews, will receive its judgment on earth. In this vision are indications of the beast being, in some points of view, a different beast after all: its heads are fallen; for the death-stroke of its last head (xiii. 3) is described as the death-stroke of the beast (xiii. 12); and the revival of the beast is described, not as Daniel describes his successive beasts coming out of the *sea*, but as a fresh beast coming out of the *bottomless pit* (xi. 7). This all suits a simple interpretation. What is it that constitutes a kingdom? It is an extraordinary concert of designs and measures, force and fear, ambition and ferocity, pride and hope, extinction and despair—a devil’s cauldron. It matters little whether each new brew, or formation of the consistency of a new empire, be symbolized as a new head giving life to the same beast, or as a new beast rising out of the same sea, or as a revived beast rising out of the devil’s bottomless pit. All empires here described are alike in blasphemy, rebellion against God’s service, and fornication against conscience and God; in detail they are successive; and yet even the fallen beasts, or heads, still exist enough to impart some of their appearance and character to the survivor. Only the ten horns have no head, or mountain—no religion, except that they war with the Lamb (xvii. 14).

If the beast under its successive heads represents seven empires opposed to God’s people (these seven empires themselves being representatives of all worldly empire), they then may be Egypt, Nineveh, Babylon, Persia,

Greece, Rome, and Christendom. These are the highest representatives of all kingdoms based on the unscrupulous rational use of temporal means, of which Nimrod's, the first distinctly recorded in sacred history (Gen. x. 10), was perhaps the first. However that be, the Roman empire existed when St. John wrote this revelation, and the actions of the beast and of its heads are as definitely symbols of the actual empire of Rome and its successors, as the actions of Daniel's beasts were of the empires they represented, beginning at each prophet's time, and extending into the future. What is past before St. John's time seems to be never alluded to, except so far as to explain the passing subject.

Neither the churches, woman, beasts, nor harlot represent men and women—neither here, nor in Daniel. They may accidentally do so, as the single horn of the goat represented Alexander the Great's kingdom, or as the male child represents Christ; but even these are a kind of twofold representation; the spiritual, intellectual organization is the thing really represented, and, though invisible, it is as real an existence in a kingdom or a church, as the king is in the one, or the church edifice may be in the other.

In chapter xiii. the beast came up out of the sea, like Daniel's beasts; one of its heads was slain, as it were, and the death-stroke was healed (xiii. 3). It was not the head only, but the whole beast which suffered from the death-stroke, perhaps when Charlemagne perished (A.D. 814), and was healed (xiii. 12). It was after the beast first came out of the sea that the dragon (Satan) gave it his power, and his throne, and great authority (xiii. 4). The interpreting angel (xvii. 8) gives a further detail: taking the tenses to suit the time of the crisis of the event he describes, which is not our English idiom, he says that the beast is, or exists, up to the time when it will be, as it were, slain, and that when it revives it will come up

not out of the sea, but out of the bottomless pit, as if Satan, when he first gave it his power, had not done so gratuitously, but had by doing so made the beast completely his own; so that, during its sort of death, its soul, as it were, had its place in the bottomless pit, the abode of Satan and his angels. Whether the beast would be more Satanic after its revival than before its death is hardly doubtful. Before its death it was purchased by Satan; after its revival its very life and being were Satanic. At all events, the revived beast would be far more Satanic than it was when it originally came up out of the sea. Now, we learn from Daniel that all the four beasts he saw came from the sea (Dan. vii. 3), and, if we add the earlier kingdoms of Egypt and Nineveh, we have all the six heads which existed, up to the Roman empire in St. John's time inclusive, all originating in the sea.

Presumably the seventh head has the same origin as the others. We must therefore expect the beast, after its resurrection from the bottomless pit, with ten horns, after all its heads had fallen, to be distinctively Satanic and Godless.

This last form of empire has another characteristic: instead of being overthrown by a successor, it goes into absolute perdition (xvii. 8). This agrees with the revelation of the gathering at Harmageddon; there is no actual fighting shown there, nothing similar to the conflict by which one earthly empire overthrows, and succeeds to, another. The victory which will result in the beast's going into perdition is to be like the victory of the Israelites over Egypt, on the Red Sea, entirely God's doing, and final.

The angel distinguishes the beast twice with the title 'which was, and is not, and is about to come (or will come)' (xvii. 8 *bis*); and of its kings he says, 'Five are fallen; one is; and one is not yet come, and will continue a little time, and the beast that was, and is not' (part of

the beast's previous distinctive title), 'is itself an eighth king, and is from the seven' (xvii. 10, 11). The distinctive title of the beast, therefore, does not show under what head the beast was slain. It might have been either under the sixth, that of St. John's time, or under the seventh; but the angel's description of the heads as kings, or governing powers, leaves no room for doubt. It is the seventh head that is slain, before the horns would receive authority as if kings, or heads—a description which implies that the symbolic beast will at the time of the horns have no real supreme king, or head.

From the time of Constantine, when the Christian empire, or seventh head, arose, the empire was divided into East and West; and with some vicissitudes, and occasionally almost union, after a short time received a mortal wound in the discontinuance of every old form of government—of empire, senate, and a fixed capital. Constantine died A.D. 337. Augustulus, the last Emperor of the West, was extinguished, as a useless and expensive functionary, by Odoacer, a Hun, of the tribe of Scyrri, who had taken service in that Emperor's guards, and had been elected by them their general and King of Italy, A.D. 476. The empire might perhaps be considered *slain* till Charlemagne's time; but possibly not till his time, for till his time the empire perhaps existed as the ideal government of the old Roman territory. His attempt at a nominal union never acquired any reality, but perhaps *Christendom* may date from about his time. He died A.D. 814; since which time Christendom can never even be *said* to have had a kingly head. The independent powers of Christendom have been bound together in one disposition, which we call civilized government; united, as a headless beast, in codes of honour and war, laws of property, and ideas of representation and freedom—all accepting the pattern of the jurisprudence of the Roman empire for their laws, civil, military, and criminal, and

accepting the Roman ideal of magnanimity, honour, violence, deception, etc., which could often supersede or direct laws. These ten kings therefore warred with the Lamb (verse 14); and whatever their weapons might be, we hear of none of His except His Word; nor does the Lamb seek a kingdom conquerable by any other weapon. The all-important war going on—one of spirit and mind, of opinion, knowledge, and judgment—gets more and more disentangled from the old class of physical contest, and gives its mark more and more to the era.

As the Roman empire lived again, though without a royal head, under conditions to strike Christendom with wonder (xvii. 8), not less striking was the survival of beast and harlot without a mountain head. The ten kings, one and all, renounced the control of a State religion. They got a support, of a changeable kind, from the papacy, with which they were always in conflict, and frequently at war, and with which their relations were on a similar footing of jealous ambassage to that of their relations to other secular States. Yet the papacy was not a head; but State religion might be said to be revived throughout the whole body of the beast in the form of the papacy, much as the Roman empire survived in the civil and military laws and notions.

16.—Meanwhile the harlot suffers both from the ten horns and from the revived beast. Having now got free from all *heads*, they begin to hate the harlot; they first rob her of temporalities, and credit, and dignity—they even strip her of her royal and priestly attire and insignia—they go on to appropriate, each into his own kingdom, anything she possessed which was worth consumption; and, as for the rest of her license and extravagance, they burn it up with fire of destructive condemnation. In all this God supports their courage to bring about what was in His mind—that, after judging and destroying their own harlot, *they* should then have the kingdom to carry on in

their own way, until the fulfilment of God's words should be completed. The angel then explains to St. John (xvii. 18) that the woman, whom he has just seen being devoured, represents the great city, which, at the time of the angel's speaking to the prophet, is ruling the kingdoms of the earth. That is unquestionably, in St. John's time, *Rome*, which is thus made, during the time of the ten horns, a symbol representative, not of earthly empire, but of all idolatry and blasphemy of false religions. She represents the city called Sodom, Egypt, and Jerusalem (xi. 8). For the harlot represents organizations which under noble professions of faith, secular and religious, really seek earthly dignity and temporalities, and whose leaders have a trust in earthly dignity and temporalities, and labour for them, and are anxious about them, and are therefore anti-Christian. The Church, which seeks the reign of God, and does all the duties which the laws and providence of God offer to its attention, having perfect trust in Him and in the Lamb, is Christian. That is, however, the diametrical opposite to the harlot's devotees. Wherever a blasphemous kingdom can maintain itself better by assuming the temper and prerogatives of a church, it is a bad sign of the church. It eats her flesh, because her flesh is like its own, and, in common with trade and manufactures, can furnish spoil such as it can enjoy.

These kingdoms of the ten horns, while they eat the flesh of the harlot, and so support their place from the same unscrupulous use of pretension, and force, and allurements as she; and while they at the same time refuse, and burn with fire, what in her is not useful for the support of their place (verse 16), are all the time—up to the time when the Lamb conquers (verse 14) and God's Word is fulfilled (verse 17) respectively—giving their power and authority to the beast, and waging war with the Lamb. How far the words of God, and the early Christian standard of society, are from harmony with the present

creeds and laws of the beast each of us may have his own opinion. The beast of this day means *existing* notions of the old Roman empire, about religion, rank, honour, morality, power, luxury, duty to the destitute, and war. While Christ's church, the stone cut out without hands, the kingdom set up by God, is breaking up and pounding to dust much of what is false in these old notions, yet the framework and outline of the figure still seem to exist in a more or less broken and fragmentary state in every part of Christendom; and there have been many unsuccessful attempts to rebuild some secular organization of empire, in whole or in part. The kingdom of God, or, if the term be preferred, the church of Christ, *cannot* rebuild it. The two standards of Christ's church, and of the beast, are as different as their origin.

18.—We observe the definition of the symbols given by the angel suits the times of the headless beast. The harlot is, *i.e.*, represents, the great city Babylon, the empire city (xvii. 18), and represents all religious harlotry. But it is nowhere said that the beast is Babylon. The explanation seems to be that the Babylonian element exists in both beast—as the head proves—and harlot, as is stated in xvii. 18; and that we are coming to the prophetic description of the complete fall and disappearance of Babylon (xviii. 21), while both beast and harlot will still continue alive, but with fallen heads.

Babylon seems representative of a very important element in harlot and beast united, and its disappearance will be like the disappearance of the mortar and cement from the joints of a massive ruin. Such an element, whatever it might be, was such as made the union of harlot and beast more perfect in the time of *Babylon* than ever since. Hence *Babylon* is chosen to represent it. It made continuity of government, and its concentration under one head, more complete than it has ever been since; and it now seems on the point of disappearing

altogether. The beast and harlot, after the disappearance of *Babylon*, must very nearly realize Daniel's description of the same era in human government, when the toes and feet of the image (Dan. ii. 41) become a mixture of *iron* and *pot*, without any mutual adhesion (*idem*, 43). The fall of *Babylon* is likely to leave religious profession separated from the State; no two States alike in their form of government or objects of expenditure; no prevalent school or class of men agreed on any theory, or versed in the practice of union on any subject whatever, relating to either re-planning, rebuilding or re-animating the old imperial ideas and methods—or even agreed on what new form of beast it would be possible to create, were the old form entirely removed. The only really solid structure in the growth of which the earth will, happily, take part is by Daniel described as a stone cut out without hands (Dan. ii. 34), a kingdom which we know is already set up by the God of heaven; and all they who are helping to build this are building what will never be destroyed, nor succeeded by any other people or kingdom (Dan. ii. 44). This fall of *Babylon* evidently takes place after the ten kings have arisen, and run their course so far as to have burnt up the harlot (xvii. 16). This fall of *Babylon* seems to be another symbol for the breaking up of all Nebuchadnezzar's image (Dan. ii. 45).

CHAPTER XVIII.

ORIGINAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

1 AFTER these things I saw another angel descending
out of the heaven, having great authority ; and the
2 earth was lighted up out of his glory : and he cried
out with a strong voice, saying, ‘ Is fallen—Babylon
the great is fallen, and is become a settlement of
demons, and a guard of every unclean spirit, and a
3 guard of every unclean and hated bird ; because from
the wrath of her fornication all the nations have
fallen, and the kings of the earth committed fornication
with her, and the merchants of the earth were
enriched from the power of her insolence.’

4 And I heard another voice from the heaven, saying,
‘ Come out of her, my people, that you should not
share in her sins, and that you should not receive out
5 of her plagues ; because her sins were stuck together
up to the heaven, and God bore in mind her
6 iniquities :—Pay her back, as she paid back ; and
double the double according to her works :—in the
7 cup which she mixed, mix to her double ; as much as
she glorified her, and was insolent, give her so much
torture and grief : because in her heart she says, “ I
am seated a queen, and am no widow, and shall
8 never see grief,” therefore her plagues will come in
one day—death, and mourning, and famine : and she
will be burnt up in fire, because the God who judged
9 her is strong. And they will lament and beat them-

selves over her—the kings of the earth who committed fornication, and were insolent, along with her
10 —whenever they look on the smoke of her kindling, standing afar off on account of the fear of her torture, saying, “Woe! Woe! The great city! Babylon, the strong city! that her judgment is come in one hour.”’

11 And the merchants of the earth lament and mourn over her, that no one buys their cargo any longer:—
12 cargo of gold and silver and precious stone and pearls, and of linen and purple, and of silken and scarlet stuff; and every cypress wood, and every ivory article; and every article out of very precious
13 wood and bronze and iron and marble; and cinnamon, and amomon ointment, and incense, and myrrh-oil, and frankincense, and wine, and olive-oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and cattle, and sheep; and (cargo) of horses, and of carriages, and of (slave) bodies; and men’s souls.

14 And thy harvest-time of the lust of the soul departed from thee; and all fair and bright things perished from thee; and they will never find them any longer.

15 The merchants of these things, who grew rich from her, will stand far off, on account of the fear of her
16 torture, lamenting and mourning, saying, ‘Woe! Woe! The great city, which was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet stuffs, and gilt in gold and precious stone and pearl! because so much wealth is desolated in one hour.’

17 And every steersman, and every one who sails for
18 a place, and sailors, and whoever work the sea, stood far off and cried out, looking on the smoke of her
19 kindling, saying, ‘What is like the great city!’ And they threw earth on to their heads and cried out lamenting and mourning, saying, ‘Woe! Woe!

The great city, in which all who have the ships in the sea were enriched out of her costliness, that she was desolated in one hour !'

20 Rejoice over her heaven, and the Saints, and the Apostles, and Prophets, that God has judged your judgment out of her.

21 And one strong angel lifted up a great stone, as if a millstone, and threw into the sea, saying, 'So will the great city Babylon be thrown headlong, and will never be found more ; and the voice of harpers, and of musical singers, and of flutists, and of trumpeters, will never be heard in thee more. And every workman of every craft will never be found in thee more :
22 and voice of mill will never be heard in thee more :
23 and light of lamp will never shine in thee more : and voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in thee more :—because thy merchants were the magnates of the earth : because all the nations were
24 led astray in thy pharmacy. And in her was found blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all who have been slain on the earth.'

THE DIVINE JUDGMENT ON BABYLON.

SECTION I. VERSES 1 TO 3. THE CRY, 'FALLEN IS BABYLON.'

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

2.—IS FALLEN: literally, *fell*. It speaks of her fall occurring at the time of the other angel's speaking.

SETTLEMENT: in our Colonial sense, a place of abode.

3.—HAVE FALLEN: *i.e.*, already, before the time of the other angel speaking.

INSOLENCE: the quality which makes a person feel strong, act roughly and hardly, and be headstrong.

Expository Notes.

1.—The next vision again introduces the name of *Babylon* (see xvi. 19 ; xvii. 5) into the vision of the harlot, as if to caution readers against taking Rome to be the city exclusively referred to as *the great city* in the previous verse. Babylon is the earliest empire city freely described in prophecy, and her name is taken as the head of the empires shown in visions, as recorded by Daniel ; as the queen of many waters, *i.e.*, of peoples, nations, and languages of earth, organized into one empire for her own luxury and glory ; and as the proud earthly power whose description by Isaiah shows a type of blasphemous insolence, and of its punishment. Lastly, Babylon is the name of the harlot. The name seems introduced into the vision as a type of something pervading all the empires, from the earliest to the latest headless form. Under the last headless form ten kings have just been described by the angel of one of the seven plagues as making the harlot desolate and naked, eating her flesh, and burning her up with fire. The name this harlot had assumed, when practising her harlotry, was *Babylon*, and the last words of the angel are that she is, *i.e.*, represents, *the great city*—the title used for Babylon in this book. It would seem, then, that the harlot represents an organization which controls the organized peoples, nations, and languages of Christendom for its own luxury and glory, with the blasphemous insolence described by Isaiah. But an anomaly which we have seen in the symbol of the beast, *viz.*, its revival after its last head is slain, and its continuing to live with horns only, has its parallel in the case of the harlot ; for she continues to live, as an organization, after the kings have burnt her up, and after the Babylon she represented has utterly perished. This organization must be the papacy. It is not its creeds, but its acts and temper as an organized body ; not its pretensions, but its

actual power, which seem to be the subject of these visions. The fall of Babylon is the fall of this power. It occurs slowly in successive stages; but the final catastrophe is its sudden and complete extinction.

The fall of Babylon here described, preliminary to her being forcibly cast down (verse 21), seems consistent with a prolonged course of judgment, the primary and most important stages of which are first mentioned. She has become a colony for demons, and what notions St. John would attach to the possession by *demons*, translated *devils* in the authorized version, we can gather from the Gospels. She has become a stronghold of every unclean spirit, from which they could issue, as David did in Saul's time, or as Arab robbers, or recently Malay pirates, do still. Other evil characters find refuge, and a centre for their operations, in her, symbolized by unclean and hated birds. Lastly, all her own adherents and dupes—nations, governments, and merchants—have fallen also.

The angel who lights up the earth with his glory may be the revival of the study of the original languages, in which the sacred Scriptures were written. The first Greek professor was appointed to teach Greek in Florence, A.D. 1360. Wycliffe completed the translation of the whole Bible from the Latin shortly before his death in 1384. And the general revival of learning, and study of Latin and Greek authors, went on increasing. At the same time the scandalous behaviour of the consecrated Romish officials, from the Pope down to the meanest who lived on the revenues of the Church, was such as to enforce a conviction of the rottenness of the papal administration, not only on the outside public, but on many churchmen in high position. The Romish Pope and his council could no longer stand before nations as queen of a sacred and infallible Church. The diabolical temper, and unclean acts, which Churchmen displayed, with the encouragement and support of the papacy, and the foul and hateful char-

acter of satellites harboured and protected by the papacy, began to be criticised and exposed, even by many dignitaries of the papal church. The harlot's treacherous dealings with kings, and her extravagance with funds raised professedly for the maintenance of priests in their spiritual duties, and of the poor, but misapplied, were proclaimed in songs, pamphlets, and sermons. This fall, the vision indicates, is gradual and progressive; for a subsequent fall is particularly proclaimed as sudden (xviii. 21), so that this fall is not sudden, though it can be seen to have irresistibly begun. Compare our Lord's expression in Luke x. 18.

SECTION II. VERSES 4 TO 20. THE HUMILIATION OF
BABYLON.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

5.—STUCK TOGETHER: or *glued*, or *welded*, or *soldered*, until they grew to a mass for which there is no more room under heaven's dome.

BORE IN MIND: may mean recorded in his own memory, or called the attention of others to, her sins. There is no idea of God *recollecting* anything He had forgotten.

8.—IN ONE DAY: *within*, or *during one day*.

WHO JUDGED: of course, in this and similar cases (such as *bore in mind*, above) the action is future to the prophet when writing, but will be past at the time about which he is writing: when she is burnt the judging will be past. This idiom is especially strong in Hebrew: take Gen. i. 2, 'The earth has existed waste and void'—taking the tense from the time at which 'God said,' etc.

9.—BEAT THEMSELVES: on the breast; one of the usual gestures of mourners.

KINDLING: *i.e.*, the kindling of her; as we should say, 'the man endured his flogging,' meaning the flogging of him, not by him.

10.—**HOUR.** See note on xvii. 12. The meaning is *in the course of one hour*, whatever season *hour* represent.

12.—**AND EVERY CYPRESS WOOD:** in apposition to *cargo*. For *and every*, here and below, the usual English idiom is *nor any*.

CYPRESS: a sweet-scented wood, possibly 'some cypress.'

14.—**HARVEST-TIME:** literally *dog-days*.

FAIR: in a workman's sense of 'fully got up,' polished and finished.

16.—**DESOLATED:** or *made waste*. See note xvii. 12.

17.—**WORK THE SEA:** *i.e.*, *live by scafaring*.

20.—**JUDGED YOUR JUDGMENT:** *i.e.*, executed on her what she executed on you.

Expository Notes.

4.—While this angel was filling up the earth of Christendom with light out of his glory, another voice from the heaven of Christendom warns God's people to come out of Babylon. The previous revelation of the sinful and unsatisfactory administration of the then established papal church by the first angel supplies the convincing reason, *viz.*, the inveteracy of her sins. While earthly power, in the earlier empires, was supporting itself by a worship of false gods, it might have been reasonably thought that power would be maintained on a pure and reformed basis, so soon as it turned for support to the worship of the true God. But, in practice, no sooner did the imperial and kingly governments seek to support themselves on the worship of the true God, than they found such a worship incompatible with the zealous pursuit and tight grasp of earthly power; and they had to support the harlot, who was willing to corrupt, debauch, and falsify that true worship, until it became mere blasphemy. Under the angel of light this scheme of fornication and of insolence was exposed, and all the earth could see the sinfulness of the harlot's worship.

This second voice is not described as that of the preceding angel, nor as coming from the temple; but, presumably, it is the voice of one or of many angels, representing prophets or teachers. Its impersonality perhaps indicates that it is the voice of *the press*; or, more exactly, of the prophets and teachers who spoke through the press. By this voice the earth is warned that the double sinfulness of empire and church, of kingly and ecclesiastical power, will result in the final judgment and destruction of both. The worship, whether pagan as seated on the seven heads (xvii. 9), or Christian as it arose from the abyss in alliance with the ten kingdoms, equally developed the mind and arts of a harlot. She could not seat herself thus without doing so. And the kingdoms accepted her allurements, and committed fornication with her, and opposed God, and killed His saints (xvii. 4-6).

Of our Lord's three last commands to His disciples, viz., to commemorate His death by bread and wine (Luke xxii. 19, 20), to wear (and, of course, use on occasion) purse, wallet, and sword, and to make disciples of and to baptize all nations, the time seems now to especially call for obedience to the second. God's people (verse 6) are called to execute judicial acts of punishment, with death, mourning and famine (verse 8). God's people are called to come out of Babylon, implying that they cannot innocently remain in her, as hoping to reform her, or to do God honour by submission to her. By staying longer, after the warning brought to their notice by this voice, they will partake of, and share in, her sins (verse 4), and will receive of her plagues (similar to the phrase St. John uses in his first epistle, iv. 13). It seems that such a warning would be meaningless if it only meant that such of God's people as should remain in Babylon would be, as before, liable to share her sins and plagues, but safe if they faithfully trusted God's protection

against both. The case of Lot is not similar; it is a contrast. He had not come out of Sodom; nor were there any warnings nor possibilities in the case. The angels were come to destroy Sodom (Gen. xix. 13), and they forcibly took Lot out of it (verse 16) and saved him from Sodom's punishment. The warning which this voice gives God's people is, that if they do not come out of Babylon they must not expect God, after this warning, to save them, as He did save Lot, who was not so warned. This call will be one which all God's real people, unlike the later Israel and unlike the Gentile empires, will obey. God's people will absolutely avoid exposure to the temptation to fornication and hypocrisy. The press and preachers of the time of the Reformation (say A.D. 1500 to 1700) gave such a warning, and we still hear it.

As to this visitation of Babylon, it is exhibited in a continuance of *strokes* or plagues (verse 8), all occurring in one day (Job i. 13), or perhaps we should say in one course of events, or in one course of complete judgment. They are such as will cause death, famine, and mourning, and they will constitute a destructive purification: she will be quite burned up. Yet the administration of these strokes seems to be entirely by the hands of God's people: they are called upon (verse 6, etc.) to do their part in the judicial purification of God's name in the sight of heaven, and of the saints, apostles, and prophets (verse 20). God's people are called upon to do the right with her; and the full vigour of the typical Mosaic law is quoted to represent this right. She is to be paid back, as she had paid back, double repayment where she had demanded double repayment; where she prepared and administered deadly wine, she is to be made herself to drink double, for her own crime and for the crime she caused. Then follows a prophecy taken very closely, sometimes verbally, from Isaiah's prophecies against Babylon (Isa. xlvii. 8, etc.), which we know were fulfilled by human

agency—by Cyrus (Isa. xlv. 1, etc.) and by Alexander the Great.

It is at the full development of Babylon that God begins to control and punish this abode of wickedness and injury by plagues, and calls upon His people to act in righteous judgment against her. When the day of this punishment shall have come, and she is utterly burnt up with fire, her once mighty claims become mere tinder, and her tons of once potent theology become mere waste-paper; then the governments, the ten kings who committed fornication with her, occupy a singular position. They neither made up their minds to come out of her, as warned by the angel of light (verse 4), nor do they stay in her to assist her. They judge her themselves (verse 10), and seeing how her misery and hatefulness is her own bringing about, and her punishment only what she deserves, they can but bewail her fall. The smoke of her burning, the moral, spiritual, and physical effects of her judgment and punishment, will ascend before their eyes, and they, like a decrepit libertine, with all the will to maintain their old revelry with the harlot, will only be fit to wail and wish, hopeless to rebuild what they see so absolutely unstable, or to create a fresh opportunity for wantonness and luxury. The ten kings and their kingdoms and satellites, who made use of the lusts and violence of the old modes of empire, and made use of them to be insolent and wanton, basing their confidence not on God, nor on His true people, but upon the ideals and practice of the old blasphemous empires—they form the last set of the series of all the empires of this world. Those empires all made men and gods, and in the latter days the true God Himself, in their own view subservient to themselves. These ten *kings*, or governments, who assume indeed the old attitude of insolence—as if they were superior to both men and God—thinly and often carelessly disguised under a language of policy—and an

affectation of preposterous humility—these are not even said to ‘fall.’ They have fallen. It is as if they were so low, all through, that it would be exaggeration to speak of their further ‘fall.’ They come into the picture (verse 9) at a distance, wailing and beating themselves, and standing farther off at every fresh look at the smoke.

That earthly power, Babylon, falls, which could use the language of ancient Babylon (Isa. xlvii. 8, etc.). The kings, or kingdoms, feel no longer a false security of perpetual power, and they wail and mourn, as seeing that their ‘good old times’ have for ever departed. They keep aloof from any assumption of supreme power or of Divine right, fearing to fall into her torture (verse 10). The merchants also do not ‘fall,’ but they also mourn the loss of all traffic in the fair and bright luxuries of ‘the good old times.’ Amongst that lost traffic is included flour, wheat, sheep, and cattle, things which we do not associate with luxury. But it must be remembered, in the first place, that the great trade in such things, as well as in slaves and captives, was always luxury under the empires, largely composed as it was of the forced captures after a raid or war, or of the forced tributes from subjugated provinces. In the second place, the power of the State gave charters, granted restrictions on markets, or latterly (*e.g.*, in Queen Elizabeth’s reign, A.D. 1533-1603) sheltered combinations and rings, which interfered with fair and open traffic. Wheat and meat, when manipulated so as to become a close monopoly, or a mere counter for gambling, or so dealt with that by artificial quotations and prices the buyers and sellers do not get fair value, support a traffic of luxury. Such things are even now happening, in new governments worshipping the old Satan.

In natural circumstances, under the guidance of God’s Spirit, each province, if not controlled by the violence of a neighbour, nor seeking to practise injustice on a neigh-

bour, would feed and supply itself, or, besides this, might have a trade with a foreign province. As all such trade would not have affected the kings or merchants of Babylon, it cannot be the loss of that trade which is a subject for the kings and merchants of Babylon to wail over. There is no reason to apply the symbols of this vision to fair and honest living and trading, but they certainly represent that the worshippers of the beast will no longer be able to appropriate the profits of honest living and trade—to squeeze out of them wine for their drunkenness, and to debauch and ruin trade for their amusement and fornication.

But there must be a very large trade absolutely lost. No doubt the trade in luxuries lamented over includes the expenditure beyond what is fair and necessary, of states, courts, corporations, and officials, and of all others who, by force or deception, draw wealth from the real producers. They use the strength of their position, and they sell false professions of love and of assistance, like a harlot, to spend the gain on themselves. They are not united in real love to the people who support them, like a wife to her husband. They trade on—as we say of a harlot, or of any false friend—they trade on the enterprise, intelligence, noble ambitions, and even on the hard enslaved toil, of the multitudes they lord it over, and insolently despise. Babylon is not worn out; the newest and smallest governments follow her most closely.

11-19.—The lament of the merchants over the city, whose grandees they had helped to clothe in scarlet and gold—in imperial and priestly fashion—implies rather an increase than a decrease in the humbler and rational trade of mutual requirements and equal exchanges. The case is not the overthrow of one empire by another, nor the dissolution of empire into anarchical violence and robbery. Some new state of things must arise, when we have the kings of the earth actually wailing and lamenting. Some

practical power, more solid than they are, must be there, to render such a thing possible; something like the stone cut out without hands, and breaking up the kingdoms, while itself growing till it became a great rock or hill, which filled the earth (Dan. ii. 34).

Not only the page of history, but the ruins still standing on her shores, mark the changes which have taken place in the trade of the Mediterranean, the great sea. There are relics still of the rig and build of the ships which under the Roman empire brought the corn of Egypt into the port of Puteoli, for gratuitous distribution to Roman citizens. In those days such ships as carried St. Paul and two hundred and seventy-five others, with a load of corn also, carried about officials, or the spoils they levied in the provinces, and brought the luxuries of the East into Europe. The old captains and sailors would really and justly lament when the power which created all this traffic, and made the seas safe for those who carried it on, expired. The trade of the Mediterranean was repeatedly revived under the patronage of empire cities. It does not seem to matter whether the government of those cities were, by name, under emperor, doge, president, or king; their principles were all alike selfish, and, however high the Christian profession, the course pursued was the old one—to coerce the weak, spoil the strong, part with the least possible payment to the producer, or necessitous, and obtain as much as fraud and temptation could prudently get from the powerful. These cities have now lost all that they possessed, including their liberties, and are paying overwhelming taxes to others.

Babylon, thus figured, represents the indulgence of that evil habit of mind which is faithless and insolent to God and man—the temper and tone described by St. Paul (Rom. i. 28-32). She represents that habit of choice and will which gives up, with the rest of the body, the brain power to contradiction and blasphemy; not to seeking

after God, but to seeking plausible pretext for unsettling good, and for doing evil. She represents the concentration of example, sophistry, temptation, and every excuse for self-indulgence, in which all who are evil-disposed, rapacious, malicious, cruel, can find a secure and complaisant refuge from their own consciences, and from their fellow-men—where they can call right wrong, cruel injustice humanity, shabby action honourable, with general assent and applause. All this reduction of selfish luxury, and this fall of usurped rights, human and Divine—a fall from universal acknowledgment, and from crushing power—occurred by the operation of just judgment, exacted out of her (Babylon), by submitting her to fair and just treatment by comparatively God-fearing and law-abiding men. Her ruins lie overturned under heaven, and can never be rebuilt.

20.—The angel concludes with an appeal to all around. He calls on all heaven to rejoice that the equity and power of God's judgment has been triumphantly indicated by this fall of Babylon. In the first case the fall of Babylon, in the course of a few hundred years, was followed by the complete annihilation of itself, and of all the country and population which supported it; but so far from annihilating the whole earth, all the rest of the earth flourished more and more nobly and prosperously than before. In the second case, the fall of Babylon leads, in process of time, to the destruction of the beast and false prophet (xix. 20), including, of course, their worshippers; but it will leave the rest of the world, who did not worship them, happier, more noble, and more prosperous, and better organized, than before. The two Babylons are, of course, type and antitype.

Perhaps a more perspicuous type of the events still to come may be found in Jerusalem. Its theocratic constitution and worship, its wealth and honour amongst nations, were all in contrast to the kingdoms of the world

and the glory of them ; but they *all* had a likeness to that perfect, divine government which was associated in the Psalms and prophets with Jerusalem. Jerusalem lost her Babylon—that power of self-support, self-defence, and victory, which was the counterpart of what Babylon represents, six or seven hundred years before she was destroyed. As an earthly state, she *fell* hundreds of years before she was *thrown down headlong* into the sea.

SECTION III. VERSES 21 TO 24. THE SILENCE OF BABYLON.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

22.—VOICE OF MILL: *i.e.*, sound of the cornmills, worked by hand or cattle.

23.—PHARMACY. Our doctors have accepted one of their most important terms from their predecessors, who practised enchantments, poisoning, and other quackery. *Pharmacy* is here used of any artificial means for producing physical effects.

Expository Notes.

21.—A strong angel has been twice seen. One (v. 2), in the upper heaven, calls for someone to break the seven seals. Another strong angel seems to have descended out of the earthly heaven, and while standing on earth gave John a scroll to eat up—an abnormal angel, seeing that his proclamation could only have come from the upper heaven ; while he appears in the clouds of earth, and stands on the earth and sea, whence he hands the scroll to John in the upper heaven. This strong angel, the third, is abnormal like the second. While he is proclaiming the time, and giving the signal for the destruction of Babylon, indicating his being from the

upper heaven, he does both these on earth. His proclamation includes a summary of the sentence or punishment awarded Babylon, and the judgment on which it is supported. The last words of this angel are addressed to the crowd around (verse 24).

The sentence delivered by the angel is worded to suit the symbolic Babylon, and speaks as of an actual city. Her complete desolation probably refers to that of the typical Babylon, as described by Isaiah (Is. xlvii. 8 to end). Isaiah's prophecy does not include the overturn and throwing down of the walls of the city. Our Lord foretold of Jerusalem (Matt. xxiv. 2) that not one stone should be left upon another that should not be thrown down. That is an example of the greatest possible destruction to any actual city; the angel, therefore, in this case of the symbolic Babylon, has to seek another figure in order to show that the destruction which he is about to describe symbolically will be more complete than could happen to a city; so sudden and complete, indeed, as to resemble the fall of a great stone into the sea, and its entire disappearance from the face of the earth. The symbol seems chosen in accordance with that which represents the beasts coming up out of the sea. Such an organization and existence as that of Babylon will be completely swallowed up by the same sea of human aspirations and conflicts, out of which she arose, and will entirely disappear from existence on earth, beyond the possibility of recall or reconstruction. So far as we can safely interpret, the angel's sentence is a prophetic description of the complete desolation of a city: much like Isaiah's (xlvii. 8); and if there be any peculiar application, the event only can show it with certainty. The last few words of the angel are abruptly addressed: verses 22, 23 to Babylon, and the 24th verse to the crowd in heaven around, as it would seem from their immediately answering the cue, in the next verse (xix. 1).

Still a greater fall is to come. Before going on to the final crash, it is well to reflect on the difference between the fall of the actual Babylon and this symbolic Babylon. The actual Babylon simply changed hands, and passed from one empire into the possession of its successor; and, indeed, her characteristic temper did not perish, but inspired all the empires following, up to, and including, the ten kings now in power. This symbolic Babylon falls while in the hands of the harlot and beast, who have no successors, and are left to get on as they can without her. The fall of the first Babylon was not the fall of the beast, which merely changed heads, or was replaced by a similar beast, according to the figure used. The fall of this Babylon leaves the beast so exposed, and in such a temper, as to choose to concentrate all his power.

CHAPTER XIX.

ORIGINAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

1 AFTER these things I heard as if a loud voice of a
large crowd in the heaven, saying, 'Halleluiah!
2 The salvation, and the glory, and the power of our
God! that his decisions are true and just:—that he
judged the great harlot, she who corrupted the earth
in her fornication; and avenged the blood of his
3 servants out of her hand!' And they said a second
time 'Halleluiah!' and her smoke ascends for the
ages of ages.

4 And the twenty-four elders and the four animals
fell, and salaamed to God who was seated on the
5 throne, saying, 'Amen: Halleluiah!' And a voice
came out away from the throne, saying, 'Praise our
God, all his servants,—you who fear him, the small
and the great.'

6 And I heard as if a voice of a large crowd, and as
if a voice of many waters, and as if a voice of strong
7 thunders, — saying, 'Halleluiah! that Lord God
almighty reigned. Let us rejoice, and be delighted,
and give glory to him, that the marriage of the Lamb
is come, and his bride made herself ready.' And it
8 was given her that she should be clothed in fine linen
cloth, bright and clean; for the fine linen cloth is the
decreed righteousness of the saints.

9 And he says to me, 'Write: Blessed are those who
are called into the dinner of the marriage of the

Lamb.' And he says to me, 'These are the true
10 words of God.' And I fell before his feet to salaam
to him : and he says to me, ' Look (thou dost it) not.
I am fellow-servant of thee and of thy brethren who
have the testimony of Jesus. Salaam to God : for
the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.'

11 And I saw the heaven opened : and See ! a white
horse, and he who is seated upon him faithful and
12 true ; and he judges and makes war in righteousness :
—his eyes, as if flame of fire ; and on his head many
13 fillets ; having a name written which no one knows
except himself, and clothed in a garment dipped in
blood : and his name is called ' The Word of God.'

14 And the armies in the heaven were following him on
15 white horses, clothed in bright clean linen cloth : and
a sharp broadsword passes out from his mouth, that
with it he should strike the nations ; and he will tend
them himself with an iron staff ; and himself treads
the winepress of the wine of the wrath of the anger
16 of almighty God ; and he has a name written upon
his garment and upon his thigh,—' King of kings,
and Lord of lords.'

17 And I saw one angel standing in the sun ; and he
cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds
which fly in midheaven, ' Hither ! Be gathered in to
18 the great dinner of God, that you should eat flesh of
kings, and flesh of colonels, and flesh of strong men,
and flesh of horses and of those seated upon them,
and flesh of all, both free and slaves,—and small and
great.'

19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth,
and their armies gathered to make war with him
20 seated on the horse, and with his army. And the
beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who
did the signs in front of it, with which he led astray
those who received the mark of the beast, and those

21 salaaming to its likeness:—the two were thrown living into the lake of fire which burns with sulphur; and the rest were killed by the broadsword of him seated on the horse, which came out of his mouth: and all the birds were fattened out of their flesh.

THE WORD OF GOD.

SECTION I. VERSES 1 TO 10. HALLELUIAH.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

1.—HALLELUIAH: Hebrew for *Praise ye Jehovah*.

SALVATION: making *sound*, as well as *safe*.

5.—AWAY FROM: may mean *away, at a distance from; alien to*. It could hardly mean 'of one speaking from.'

6.—OF MANY WATERS.—So in i. 15, etc.; a sound as wide as the sea; and as a surf is heard far inland.

OF STRONG THUNDER: as extensive and indeterminate.

SAYING: is in the plural, and agreeing in gender with the *crowd*—like *saying* in iv. 1. But it is in the nominative case, as if the verse had begun with an interjection 'A crowd!' or 'Lo, a crowd!' and then the words, 'I heard as if . . . thunders,' were in a parenthesis.

7.—REIGNED: *i.e., has shown that he is, and always has been, the real king*.

8.—DECREED RIGHTEOUSNESS: literally, *acquittals by judgment*.

10.—TESTIMONY OF JESUS: is the testimony given by word and life, of what Jesus has revealed to a man; including the temper, strength and grace, as well as any revelation of truths conveyed by writings, visions or experience. (Compare i. 2, 9.)

Expository Notes.

1.—This crowd in heaven seems to be the people appealed to by the previous angel (xviii. 20), viz., heaven,

and the saints, and apostles. It seems (as in verse 6) to include all those personally interested in the marriage of the bride—Christ's sheep, gathered from inside and outside His fold, or church, from all ages and places of the world. From the burden of the praise put into their mouth, it is clear that both the salvation of His people, and the banishment or destruction of the devotees of the harlot by the justice of God, will have an effect long after the events by which it was exhibited shall be over. The effect of the punishment—one of the great objects of all punishment—will never be lost, but will ascend, like a smoke, for ever. Whether the crowd in heaven be angels, or glorified saints, or souls of the dead, is not distinguished; but, whoever they be, the praise they give is too remarkable to be considered merely vicarious, as if disinterested angels praised God for His boon to men. It is the end of a struggle in which all have been personally engaged—the Son of man, Michael and his angels, the souls of the saints—and the victory won will be a subject of praise to all for ever.

4.—Those who in the vision represent before God the visible creation and the spiritual Church say 'Amen' to the praise of the crowd; and so indicate a thorough participation, on the part of what they represent, in that praise—as above, as experiencing the glory, as well as uniting in the expression of the praise. It is clearly implied, however, by an answering voice, that some inhabitants of the earth remain who do not fear God. Whose voice this is, whether of many or few, is left indeterminate, except that nowhere else does God or Christ speak in the terms used by this voice of Himself or of the other.

6.—The voice now heard seems to be the voice of those of mankind who did not form part of the organized states governing on the old imperial basis, nor worship its power; and it is united with the voice of God, and of

His inspired prophets. It is the noise of the surf or waves of the sea out of which the beasts came, and the sound of thunders such as accompanied the revelation of God through Moses, or of thunders such as were uttered by the voice of God Himself. It ushers in the personal reign of God on earth, in the closest union with His saints past and present. In preparation for that union the saints are clothed, as glorified saints, in perfect righteousness (comp. vii. 14), *i.e.*, they are clothed in robes which they have made clean and bright in the blood of the Lamb, and which have been judicially tried, and decreed to be clean and bright; they are saints justified by God's decree, by a judgment which satisfies and convinces earth and heaven. Yet these are not seen as glorified saints in the ordinary meaning of the term; they have neither palm branches nor harps.

The burden of this voice is, to hail God as King, and the Lamb as a bridegroom. No doubt our Lord's entry into Jerusalem as King, meek, and riding upon an ass, bore a typical reference to this coming, in the same body (Acts i. 11) in which He had left His disciples. St. John now sees his Lord, not coming to judgment, but as King and Bridegroom: to receive the kingdom from His Father, and to unite His bride to Himself in that kingdom.

9.—The instruction to St. John to *write* is given him in chap. i. 19 by Christ; in xiv. 13 by a voice from heaven; and here by an angel, a fellow-servant. In each case, the object of the command to St. John is to impress a sure, weighty, and encouraging message upon the true servants of God who may read his prophecy.

The marriage of the Lamb with a bride clothed in bright and clean linen, or with saints judged and acquitted, takes place on earth, and is as visible in its effects as the punishment of Babylon. If the *bride* include all saints, living as well as departed, then those *called in to*

the dinner must be only those who are not saints; and this would also require that all saints, thereafter on earth, shall have been already judged and acquitted and clothed; but this is not clearly expressed, and seems unlikely. These saints do not have harps or palm branches, and therefore are not seen in the full glory of heaven; but it is obvious that when Christ comes to reign personally on earth the condition of saints past and living will be modified from what it is now. The vision seems to make it clear that the living saints will no longer be in the wilderness, no longer be trodden under feet by the nations, and no longer be exposed to the persecution of any more beasts. They will be quite protected and shepherded (verse 15), in presence of the unbelievers, by Christ Himself, who will keep them with irresistible and unyielding power under a strict and righteous rule. He also will punish the unfaithful and, presumably, reward the faithful, whenever the due time for so doing come. But it does not please Him to be alone in this kingdom. He endows with all the privileges of a bride saints—presumably those not living who are purified from all sin (verse 8). They participate in His acts, purposes, and glory, so much as to make this an ample repayment of what they suffered before their judicial acquittal. Presumably they have been raised from the dead, with a similar glorified body to that of their Master and Saviour. If the condemned were repaid double for what they had inflicted, we may be sure that the acquitted will be repaid at least double for what they suffered. In this view it will be only the living saints who will be *called in to the dinner*—received as guests, clothed also in wedding garments, fed and trusted by the King; but it seems unsafe, from what is given us, to define exactly what living saints will be called, and what admitted into the body of the bride. Nor can it be safe to press the symbols and metaphors into refinements of interpretation.

If we turn to St. Paul's first extant epistle (1 Thess. iv. 15-18), we have his description of the return to earth of those who sleep. So far as he gives it, he gives it solemnly, 'by the authority of the Lord' (1 Thess. v. 15). Of this description it is remarkable that the Thessalonians took it to describe something then taking place, or immediately to be expected (2 Thess. ii. 2, 3). It is likely that St. Paul considered both his hearers and himself ought to be prepared for it at any moment. In later times the description has been taken to imply that the events included in it would all take place at once, if not like a clap of thunder, certainly within a few days. Disabusing our minds of any of these prejudices, we find St. Paul asserts that the dead in Christ will first arise to life (1 Thess. iv. 16) — a term always used of our Lord after His resurrection. His disciples saw Him at intervals during forty days, such as He now is, acting as He now does, but not fully glorified by possession of His kingdom on earth. After that resurrection, St. Paul continues, the living will be caught up with them; he does not say all at once; he says nothing to imply that the resurrection of those thereafter living will be more sudden, or come to them in any different way from that in which it came to those living before. He only implies that those who die after this shout of war, and first resurrection, will join the saints with the Lord in the clouds at once, on their death, without any delay in Paradise or elsewhere.

10.—The prophetic significance, if any, of St. John's falling down to worship this angel (xvii. 1) here, and afterwards (xxii. 8), is not apparent, unless it be a warning which the experience of human nature showed to be here appropriate. So many of mankind had slavishly worshipped the beast, and blasphemously insulted God, in fear and wonder at the power of the beast, that a symbolic warning seems here appropriate not to worship the bride, nor angels, nor any, however grand and powerful in earth

or heaven ; but to worship ever God alone. It also shows us that, in the august assembly of heaven and kingdom of God, there are none who wish to receive the worship due to God, none who seek to have any worship paid to themselves, none who will accept any such worship as the beast did.

SECTION II. VERSES II TO I6. THE FAITHFUL AND TRUE WITNESS.

Expository Notes.

II.—The very face of nature seems changed. A vision is seen of a white horse and rider, like that of the first seal, but as much more glorious as a principal is above his agent, or a king above his ambassador. St. John's description identifies the rider with Him who dictated the letters to the seven churches—the Son of God. We are invited to try to interpret the prophetic indications of what the world will then be like.

In the first place, Christ Himself will judge and war in righteousness, as decidedly and really as men in our day, under the seven seals, have to purchase or work for their daily bread, and are subject to war, disease, and death. It is extraordinary to find St. John's prophecy (A.D. 100) repeating in outline the type which Moses (B.C. 1500) described as actual history. The theocracy in the wilderness—lost so completely, lost so long ago—is revived in St. John's dreams as a real and living type of what the world is shortly to experience. The *visible* presence on earth of Christ, or of the re-risen saints, is nowhere indicated. Instead of seven heads, each with a fillet or diadem, this symbol of Christ wears on his head many fillets ; surely representing for each fillet, at least, as much kingdom and power upon earth as the largest kingdom and greatest power of any of the old empires. All the fillets are on one head, while those of the dragon were each on a separate head (xii. 3), and each of the horns of the beast had

a separate fillet (xiii. 1). Daniel's fourth beast had ten horns (Dan. vii. 7). We infer that the many fillets on one head (xix. 12) represent not successive kingdoms, like those of the dragon, but contemporaneous kingdoms, like those of the horns. But while the horns represent diverse kingdoms, which may pluck each other up by the roots (Dan. vii. 8), so independent of the beast that it is mentioned that they give their kingdom to the beast for a time only (xvii. 17), this rider of the white horse has all the kingdoms united on his single head, indicating the union in Christ's government of unnumbered states on earth, all at one and the same time. His name is written for all to see and learn; but it is not known to any but himself. While it will characterize his action as much as the names of *blasphemy* (xvii. 3), or of *mother of harlots* (xvii. 5), it is ever beyond the range of the faculties or knowledge of men, or of any created beings; but he is known upon earth as *The Word of God* (as in John i. 1, etc.). Of his harness, or clothing, only two or three things are mentioned—the bloody garment, the sword of his mouth, and the, perhaps future, iron staff; he wears his garment dipped in blood, to show that he comes in the character of *Saviour*, as explained in Is. lxiii. 3, etc.—of course, to a world which needed salvation. He is armed with the sword of his mouth, as one that speaks in righteousness—*righteousness* is faithfulness of God to his principles of action, revealed in his works and Word—mighty to save (Is. lxiii. 1). He is followed by the armies of heaven, not as when he fought the battle and gained the victory alone, and without even a reserve in sight (Is. lxiii. 3, 5).

It seems obvious that great caution is necessary in interpreting the future action by which this rider will glorify his inscrutable name. The utter failure of the devout Jews, between the times of Isaiah and Christ's first coming, to interpret the character of Christ's kingdom may well warn us. At his first coming no attitude could

be farther removed from that of a physical warrior and slayer than that which Christ assumed; yet it would be hard to say, humanly speaking, whether the name of Christ or of Mahommed has sent most men to slaughter in battle (Matt. x. 34). Within this rider's kingdom we may feel sure that there will be no armed rebellion against him under his only proclaimed title, *the Word of God*, as there is none against law in a well-governed country now. This *Word of God* will not mean the printed words of his prophets and apostles, but the Word which has spoken, and will speak, through all his works from the beginning, and which he has put, and will put, into the hearts and mouths of all who seek it. As obviously, punishment for wrong-doing will not cease on earth, but will be made as effective and severe as is an iron staff; for we cannot suppose all the slights, cruelties, affronts, ambition and deceits which are now left out of law, and can only be settled, if at all, by war or repentance, brought into a code of *rule*, and that rule adequately supported against infringement, without the addition of much celerity and force to punishment. Smashing pottery with an iron staff seems a figure only adequate for efficiency; and that is the figure given by the Son of God himself of the rule which his faithful servants are actually to exercise (ii. 18, 27) over the nations. Whether these punishments will be inflicted by men is not clearly seen in this particular vision. As in Isaiah (lxiii. 3) the rider is said to tread the wine-vat himself—and certainly he alone has, and can give the requisite authority (Matt. xxviii. 18)—but it seems certain that, whatever be the way of the Lord of glory, in that way will both his bride in heaven and his people on earth be guided to imitate him, at a becoming distance.

16.—The third name, written upon the rider's garment and thigh, seems analogous to a distinctive mark, token or title, by which any executive officer, military or civil, is usually made known to all beholders, and his position and

authority declared. It may be a tabard, coat of arms, a button, or a scarf. In this case the full inscription, and its position, seem to be an allusion to some dedicatory inscriptions on notable statues. Pausanias (quoted by Alford) speaks of a statue having written on its thigh: 'The Mendæans placed me here as an offering to Jove, the King of Gods,' or words to that effect. In this case the rider bears an inscription of his office and authority—an inscription which could have no other author than God Himself—'King of kings, and Lord of lords'; and this was clear and legible to all.

SECTION III. VERSES 17 TO 21. THE WOE OF THE BEAST AND THE FALSE PROPHET.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

17.—ONE. There is equal authority for *another*, instead of *one*. Whichever reading be right, it seems to mean the same thing, that the angel was not one of the crowd nor army.

18.—FLESH. Literally *fleshes*—the plural of the word used by our Lord of His own flesh, as recorded by St. John (John vi. 51, 53, etc.)—meaning the whole flesh of each king, horse, etc. The birds were called to eat them entirely up, as such birds would do.

STRONG. Used both physically and figuratively, like our word *powerful*.

20.—CAPTURE: the word St. John uses in his Gospel (vii. 30): 'They sought then to *take* Him.'

WHICH: *i.e.*, the *fire*.

21.—WHICH: *i.e.*, the *broadsword*.

FLESH. Still plural.

Expository Notes.

17.—This angel stands in the sun, a figure evidently disconnected with that of a figure in heaven clothed in the sun (xii. 1), or with a face like the sun (x. 1). There is

nothing to indicate a change of scene from earth and its heaven. This angel, then, stands in the sun, or ruling authority over the earth, and represents the action of that authority. Whether the sun have full consciousness of the effect of its action, or whether there be in it conscious intention at all, is not stated. One would rather suppose that the action of the *sun* is attributed to the angel (comp. ii. 4, etc.). He is said to make the proclamation, not the sun. The burden of his *cry* reminds us of the ten kings eating the flesh of the harlot (xvii. 16), and of our Lord's repeated reference to the eating of His own flesh, without which none can have eternal life (John vi. 53, 54). The latter is spiritual (John vi. 63); the former is carnal, if we include in the meaning of *carnal* carnal-mindedness and intellect. In each case there is no blood. Neither is literal, but they are both figurative. Birds in prophecy seem not to represent particularly either good or bad. Even flesh-eating birds, which one would expect to represent something deserving aversion, or even disgust, if any birds are to do so, are more often brought into prophecy as proclaimers, or bearers, of what is good or glorious, than of what is evil. They may here mean that on earth universally men, corporations, States, high and low, believers and unbelievers, while they destroy, will live upon and use—in fact, will have free use of for their general support—the wealth, sustenance, knowledge, and, indeed, all the existence left, of the old governments and society, after the evil in them shall have been slain, and all the Babylonian and imperial element eliminated. It seems clear that the distinctions, such as now exist, of civil and military orders, servant and master, high and low, will at the great dinner of God (verse 17) be entirely absent; but what is good in them will not be lost. There will still be useful opportunity, experience, and temper, and whatever else can be assimilated to what Christ taught on earth, and requires in heaven. Nothing worth having will

be lost. Distinctions, as they remain, being founded on true and ample judgment, will be intensified (Luke xix. 17, 19, 24).

19.—The prophet Daniel, in his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, tells us that 'in the days of those kings, etc.' (Dan. ii. 44, 45). We notice that this kingdom set up by God on earth—this mountain—grows till it fills the whole earth, in the days of all four kingdoms represented by the image. Presumably these same kingdoms, when represented as beasts by Daniel, or as heads by John, would be all considered alive, in a certain sense, during the whole time in which that mountain grows, and while it fills the whole earth. But St. John uses another figure to symbolize this same era. Instead of an image and a mountain, he sees all the kingdoms of the earth gathered together to war with the horseman and his army. Again, Daniel (ii. 34) sees the stone, not the mountain, break in pieces the feet of the image; and then all were broken in pieces, 'iron, clay, brass, silver, and gold,' by the stone (verse 45), not by the mountain, out of which the stone was cut; and yet he identifies the mountain and stone (verse 44) so closely that the kingdom which the mountain represents is described as breaking up the kingdoms which the image represents. There seems to be only one possible explanation, viz., that God's faithful people share, not only in the enjoyment of Christ's kingdom, but in Christ's conquering of it. This share St. John sees symbolized by their forming Christ's army in the war with the kingdoms. Such an army should, of course, fight with Christ's weapons, with the sword of God's Word, not with the weapons of ordinary human wars. In accordance with this, we notice that in none of the symbols is blood mentioned. Daniel says that the material of the old empires will be pounded together, and be blown out of the earth like chaff before the wind. St. John sees the two beasts of the dragons, the beast and the false prophet, captured and thrown

into the lake of fire alive. The time of the overthrow, as in Daniel, *mutatis mutandis*, is after the organization of the army under the rider of the white horse. It is the stone and the rider, but with some participation of the mountain and army, that destroy the empires. If there be any actual slaughter, as must be supposed likely, it is by God's direct action, as typified by the destruction of Pharaoh in the Red Sea, and as indicated by the prophecy, reiterated by our Lord Himself, that Christ should sit at God's right hand till God subdued His enemies. St. John does not describe the fight seen in the vision, but he makes it clear that the battle here represented is not one of ordinary war, but is won by the preaching and effect of Christ's Word. The army under the beast, representing real people, is slain by the sword of the mouth; it may be in the sense of ceasing all allegiance to the beast and false prophet, and, at all events outwardly, ceasing to present any coherent opposition to the army of the rider of the white horse. Of course other wars, and disciplinary smashing to pieces, may possibly be going on, but not as part of this war.

The rest, i.e., the kings, or kingdoms of the earth, and their armies, which were gathered to make war with the rider of the horse, to oppose allegiance to Christ, and righteous government according to His will, were killed by Christ's words. This *killing* seems inconsistent with *reforming*. The persecuting kingdoms and empire are alike spoken of as done away. In fact, like the figures of *mammon*, or of *the world*, they have no significance, except so far as they are worshipped, and are effective in diverting allegiance from Christ; when they cease to do that they are *ipso facto* slain.

Before considering the symbol of throwing the two—the beast, representative of purely worldly empire (xiii. 1, etc.), and the Satanic mouthed beast (xiii. 11, etc.), called the false prophet—into the lake of fire, it will not be amiss

to consider Jeremiah's description of the *king*, or kingdom, of Judah, when it was become worldly, and so hostile to God that its magnates were to be cast into the fire (Jer. xvii.). Partly from direct description of what it was, and partly from description of what it was not, we learn that the king then sitting on the throne of David, and his servants, his administrators, did not execute judgment and righteousness, or deliver the spoiled from his oppressor; but did wrong and violence to the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, and shed innocent blood. On that account the Lord swore that this house will be a desolation (referring to the temple, Jer. vii. 13, 14, apparently, and including the kingdom); the choice cedars will be cut down and cast into the fire, by destroyers whom he will prepare, or sanctify. Further on (Jer. xxii. 24, etc.) the Lord swears that Jeconiah, or Coniah, should be plucked thence, and he and his seed are thrown out, and he is written childless, and none of his seed will prosper sitting on the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah (verse 30). Yet St. Matthew gives Jeconiah as an ancestor of Christ, through Shealtiel his son (agreeing with 1 Chron. iii. 17, 18). The explanation of this apparent inconsistency seems to be that our Lord's *kingdom* was not a successor to Jeconiah's, neither in tone, temper, mind, nor object of worship. Coniah, or Jehoiachin (2 Kings xxiv. 8, etc.), had no successor in that.

Perhaps both St. John and Daniel imply that the old kingdoms, as organizations, will be hopelessly and for ever destroyed or burnt up, without any remains of the terrors, fascinations, or powers on earth, or of followers, being for ever condemned and deserted by all living men. The ruins of the empires of beast and false prophet, and the remains of all other kingdoms, will lie desert, like the wasted cities of old; their constitutions, ideas, histories, and customs being open to any who choose to examine, and to use or leave.

CHAPTER XX.

ORIGINAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

1 AND I saw an angel descending out of the heaven,
having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great
2 chain upon his hand : and he seized the dragon—
that is, the ancient snake, who is devil and Satan—
3 and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him
into the bottomless pit, and locked and sealed on the
top of him ; that he should no longer lead the nations
astray, until the thousand years should be finished.
After that he must be loosed for a little time.

4 And I saw thrones—and (some) sat upon them ;
and judgment was given to them—and the souls of
those who had been beheaded on account of the
testimony of Jesus, and on account of the Word of
God, and of whoever did not salaam the beast nor his
likeness, and did not receive the mark upon their
5 forehead and upon their hand ; and they lived and
reigned with Christ a thousand years : the rest of the
dead did not live until the thousand years should be
6 finished. This is the first resurrection : blessed and
holy is he who has part in the first resurrection ;
upon them the second death has no authority ; but
they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will
reign with him the thousand years.

7 And whenever the thousand years should be
8 finished, Satan will be loosed out of his prison, and
will come out to lead astray the nations (who are) i

the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them into war—of whom, the number of them
 9 —as if the sand of the sea : and they went up upon the breadth of the earth, and encircled the array of the saints, and the beloved city. And fire descended
 10 out of the heaven, and ate them up. And the devil, the leader of them astray, was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur, where also the beast and the false prophet are ; and they will be tortured day and night for the ages of ages.

11 And I saw a great bright throne, and him seated on it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled, and no place was found for them.

12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in front of the throne. And scrolls were opened : and another scroll was opened, which is (one) of life. And the dead were judged out of what was written in the
 13 scrolls according to their works : and the sea gave the dead who were in it ; and death and Hades gave the dead who were in them : and they were judged,
 14 each, according to their works. And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire : this (death) is the
 15 second death—the lake of fire ; and if anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

THE OLD SERPENT.

SECTION I. VERSES I TO 3. SATAN BOUND.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

1.—UPON : the same word as in ch. v. 1.

2.—DEVIL : *i.e.*, slanderer. Satan, *i.e.*, adversary (in Hebrew).

3.—AFTER THAT : or *after them*—the years—is quite as literal.

A LITTLE TIME : so in John vii. 33 ; xii. 35, of shorter

intervals; and in vi. 11 of a longer interval, apparently extending from St. John's time to the beginning of the 1,000 years.

Expository Notes.

1.—As the great flame-coloured dragon, Satan, with his seven heads and ten horns, was in heaven (xii. 3) before the woman was driven into the wilderness, so now again he is directly treated as if in heaven—the earthly heaven. An angel—an agency carrying out the intentions of God—descends from heaven, out of which the dragon had been cast previous to the events of chap. xiv., with the key of the bottomless pit—the means of closing it effectually—and with a great chain hanging on his hand. This chain is a quite different word to that used by St. Peter (2 Pet. ii. 4). He there says how God treated the angels who sinned: He 'brought them to Tartarus'—the gulf below the earth, as the heavens are above the earth—'with scorching (things) of gloom, and delivered them over in custody for judgment;' but it seems to be a figure to express the same idea. The bottomless pit is a Jewish expression, the nearest Grecian one being Tartarus; and it has been seen before, under the fifth trumpet, unlocked by a star from heaven, to emit smoke and locusts. We are told by one of the seven angels with plagues that the first, the scarlet, beast which carried the harlot would ascend out of it (xvii. 8), with seven heads and ten horns. Into this pit the angel is now seen to put the great fire-coloured dragon with seven crowned heads and ten horns, which was cast by Michael and his angels out of heaven, and which, when on earth, went away to war with the woman's seed who kept God's commandments. This dragon was thrown from heaven to earth when the powers of Christendom, then the Roman Empire, abolished paganism and professed Christianity. That false Christianity the devil corrupted, and then elevated and supported it as a corrupt and blasphemous profession

—the veritable old harlot, drunk with the blood of saints (xvii. 6). He effected this by his operations *on earth*. The assumptions and government of the harlot were rendered possible, and supported, only by the anti-Christian temper of the *people* (xvii. 15) over whom she established her power. By the angel now seen the dragon is expelled from *earth*—the power of Christ's word (xix. 15) has subdued and removed the beasts, and slain all other kings and their forces; so that henceforth men are not of a temper to be controlled or misled by the dragon; and he disappears from *earth* for a thousand years, apparently some 360,000 ordinary years.

From that time we may, perhaps, conceive man living in the presence of God's laws, works, and guidance—as beasts have done in their physical development—willingly and naturally. With the conquest and removal of the dragon it must be supposed that mankind, as a whole, approach notably to that participation of the Divine nature, and to that escape from the corruption that is in the world by lust, which the best of us now can reach (2 Pet. i. 4). The thousand years seems to mean an era of great spiritual development, though men will continue men, imperfect and sinful, and requiring to be shepherded—and that with a staff of iron. The intellectual development of man since his first formation (Gen. i. 27, Heb.), or making into a man (*idem*, LXX.), and the physical aptitudes and powers he has acquired during that development, is likely to be quite dwarfed by the result of his spiritual development in perhaps an equal geological era. But as, in heaven, angels transgressed and fell, so on earth, at its best, we should suppose such a liability. And it might reasonably go so far as to make men wish for, seek for, and at last submit to, the dragon again; when so long a time shall have elapsed, a time so long as to bring our solar system into questionable continuance.

It is a matter of interest to determine what the dragon

and the bottomless pit, in earth, mean. The dragon is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole inhabited (world) (xii. 9); and so the great city is called Sodom and Egypt, where the Lord was crucified (xi. 8). This dragon here is (represents) the devil and Satan. Therefore, not only the symbolical form and colour of the dragon, and his actions, but also analogy of the language used, indicates that the mere personal Satan is not represented, but a temper and mind existing in numbers of men, causing them to act together in such a union as is elsewhere represented by a beast or by a city. The dragon is of the same symbolic kind as the woman, and is shown opposed to her and her seed, which the beasts are not. The beasts indicate no tone, temper, mind, or object for persecuting the woman's seed, except where it brings men in obvious, or suspected, opposition to their authority; the dragon, on the contrary, represents that temper or mind which is hostile to all who love Christ and His righteousness. Whatever power is given by God to Satan, or to any other adversary, it is no power of spiritual influence, but only of outward circumstance, or of such ideas and fancies as outward circumstances might bring to our consciousness by the agency of our human faculties. Such power of Satan is undoubtedly limited. We do not know the conditions of existence of this adversary (Satan), but St. John records our Lord's giving him the name of ruler, or magistrate, of this world (John xii. 31; so xiv. 30, xvi. 11). In the last case, our Lord cannot mean by *the ruler of this world* an individual Satan, having a judgment pronounced on him by God; but he includes a set of tenets and minds (or lusts), actuating a group of men on earth, under the initiative of the individual devil, Satan; just such a set as, considered as a human organization only, is symbolized by a beast. And this in St. John's vision is symbolized by a dragon. This, our Lord said, had been judged (meaning, perhaps,

that the judgment had begun) by the world ; as the preceding context and the natural meaning of the passage show, he does not say, by God.

The *bottomless pit* seems to have been a phrase in use in St. John's time to express the abode of devils when prohibited an abode in men (Luke viii. 31). In that sense it may be used by St. Paul (Rom. x. 7), where it seems to be an expression of his own to give the sense of *beyond sea* (in Deut. xxx. 13), or perhaps to intensify the sense of Deuteronomy. At least, it is not used there in the LXX. These two places are the only ones in the New Testament—except in Revelation—in which the word (*abyss* in Greek) is used ; but in the LXX. it is used to express *the deep* (Gen i. 2). As has been before said, all that seems certain is that in Revelation the *bottomless pit*, perhaps pictured as a hole right through the flat earth into the space below, represents a place of complete removal from the earth, its sea, and its heaven : *i.e.*, at all events, from Christendom.

SECTION II. VERSES 4 TO 6. THE FIRST RESURRECTION.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

6.—HOLY: or *saint*. It is the same word.

HAS PART IN. Used in the New Testament only in John xiii. 8. It may mean *has a share in* ; or it may mean *has a part of himself in* (as in Luke xi. 35, where the phrase is negative).

Expository Notes.

4.—Daniel (Dan. vii. 22) saw how the little horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them ; until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to (Heb. and LXX.) the saints of the Most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. From

the earliest times the *ancient* men, dead or living, seem to be those referred to as the highest to whom to appeal for judgment in difficult matters (Job xii. 12, where they are compared with God; 1 Sam. xxiv. 13; Ps. cxix. 100, etc.); so we see there was a fitness and consistency in the *Ancient of days* making the saints judges. The association seems confirmed if Dan. vii. 9 bear the meaning (which it has in LXX.) that thrones were set, and the Ancient of days sat; because the thrones can be for none others than the saints to whom judgment was given. This makes the interpretation of St. John's vision, here, simple, viz., that the saints, as ancients—the dead saints of old—were seen associated with Christ in His kingdom, as in other things so in judgment. In fact, here St. John seems to have Daniel's words so running in his mind, that he loses his own grammatical consistency in following them. He fails to say who sat on the thrones; and he says that judgment was given to the thrones; yet it must have been the saints, who are expressed in Daniel, whom he has in mind in both cases.

We have seen Satan removed from earth; so that there is no evil power to deal with, more than that in the nature of imperfect, and therefore sinful, man. Immediately after Satan's removal, a certain judgment is symbolized. Its nature is somewhat obscurely seen: it is not said who judged; nor is the meaning of *giving judgment* quite clear; for the phrase is nowhere else used in the New Testament. It agrees verbally with the LXX. of Dan. vii. 22, where the symbol for the judgment is a fiery stream issuing and coming forth before the Ancient of days, resulting in the beast being slain, its body destroyed, and itself burnt with fire. Assuming, then, that this judgment is akin to that described by Daniel, we ascertain that the thrones are occupied by ancient saints, not living men; that the judgment is exercised upon things on earth amongst living men; and that the

condition of those seated on the thrones is symbolized by *souls*, or *lives*, such as were seen below the altar, in the fifth seal (vi. 9), praying for judgment; and consequently the condition of these ancient saints is such as Christ, in common with His servants who are like Him in His resurrection (Rom. vi. 5), had after His resurrection and ascension, and will have till He comes again (Acts i. 11). The description of these saints avoids (it cannot be unintentionally) including all who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life; and yet it does not positively limit them to those who have heard the Gospel. So we must leave it.

Besides participating in Christ's life and judgment, these ancients reign with Him for a thousand years. Considering how the measures of time and number have been used symbolically in St. John's vision—7, 10, 1,000; hour, day, year—it will be safe to take this *thousand years* (it is not *a thousand of years*) as meaning an era next less in length and importance to an *age*; just as in Israel a *thousand* was the group of men or families next less in number and importance to a *tribe*. During that time there is no further resurrection of the dead; and the re-risen saints are saved as thoroughly from sin as they have been from death, and will be from the lake of fire (verse 14). The living saints who die will at once join their re-risen predecessors in the clouds (1 Thess. iv. 17). The rest of the dead will not rise till after this era; but these who share in the first resurrection are blessed, and saints (*i.e.*, sacred and holy), and will be priests of God and Christ, and will reign with Him. Here we see that remarkable uniting of the 'persons' of the Deity, the Father and Son, God and Jehovah, in the last book of the Bible, as in the Old Testament books. The ultimate relations—to use a mathematical term—of God and Christ, and those whom God has given to Christ, and whom Christ has saved, have been forcibly given by

St. John in our Lord's words (John xvii. 21, etc.), and are now given as forcibly in our Lord's symbols, and in St. John's inspired description of them.

SECTION III. VERSES 7 TO 10. SATAN LOOSED.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

9.—ENCIRCLED : or *moved round*.

ARRAY. Used for order, either of battle, of a camp, or of quarters, of an army.

Expository Notes.

7.—After this era, the thousand years, Satan will be loosed. No form is here given to him in the vision, but he will at this time be admitted into the hearts of many, and accepted by them as a guide, forming some organization of evil passions in all the corners of the earth—we may probably say the world, for Christendom seems likely to have absorbed the whole world. This organization, instead of appearing here as a beast or dragon, is called Gog and Magog—probably turbulent hordes and unions, not fixed sufficiently in their passions and minds to be classed as *beasts*. They will surround and threaten all those whose minds and objects and methods are righteous, and consecrated to God's service; and will experience judgments from God such as will entirely eat them up. Then the devil, Satan, with the beast and false prophet, will be thrown into some abyss or lake of destructive judgment, where they will have no creatures of God to work upon, and no laws of God subject to their perversion or misuse. With every germ of possible growth and mischief, as it were, singed off, their torture will be obvious to others, as well as effective in destroying them for ever.

It is an interesting search to endeavour, from the revelations God has given us, to form a sufficient conception of what will be the signs of the times, such as our Lord

has told us to observe and discern, preparatory to the great judgment of God, and to the final banishment of evil. We know that the Jewish nation quite failed to possess a true conception of our Lord's first coming as the Messiah and Saviour; yet as long ago as David, signs of His coming were described in prophecy. However, Christ at His second coming will come as a Judge, and we shall do well to consider what are essential characteristics of a well-ordered court of trial, and of the preparatory measures for the open trial of any great case, in a way to convince the whole court and spectators. It seems from this chapter that the trial approaches without any cataclysms or supernatural interruptions. On the contrary, there is a long preparatory era, during which the only judges are, not Christ, but re-risen saints (verse 4); and they are described as ruling the world with justice, and during the absence of the imprisoned dragon. For 'a thousand years' the nations are entirely protected from all deception by Satan, and even their own follies and misdemeanours are crushed to pieces, like misshapen pots broken up by an iron bar; so that their conduct under so just and paternal a discipline will be a convincing proof of their disposition. It is at the close of this probation that Satan, whom we read of as first admitted to tempt man in Eden, is a second time admitted to tempt the nations; and this trial is to be the last and convincing one. God's final revealed judgment follows, as, indeed, it did in Eden after the first trial, or temptation, of the man God had created.

In the last three verses of the sixth psalm David, placed by God in his throne over God's kingdom of Israel, prophetically anticipates the realization of the government of Christ's actual kingdom by judges, of which he himself was only a type, when they will receive the answer to David's prayer—when workers of iniquity will be all removed, and enemies all ashamed and turned backward.

SECTION IV. VERSES II TO 15. THE VISION OF THE JUDGMENT.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

II.—FROM WHOSE FACE. The same expression in Acts iii. 19 is translated, ‘so there may come seasons of refreshing *from the presence of the Lord,*’ or *from His face.* Here, therefore, it is nearly equivalent to *at whose presence*; and has no meaning of the earth and heaven fleeing away *from His presence.* The presence of Him on the throne is described as giving the time of their fleeing, and does not describe the agency causing them to flee.

HEAVEN: *i.e.*, the earthly heaven; of course not the material earth or heaven, but the symbolic.

12.—WHAT WAS WRITTEN does not mean what was being written at the time. It was already written; just as in the previous verse John does not mean that he saw anyone in the act of being put upon the throne.

WORKS: *i.e.*, actions and deeds, and the results of them. So in verse 15, etc.

14.—LAKE OF FIRE: see note on xxi. 8.

Expository Notes.

II.—The word *judgment*, or pronouncing sentence, is sometimes coupled with Christ, as where He says, ‘I judge no man. And if ever I judge, My judgment is true’ (John viii. 16); or, ‘As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just.’ Quoting from the LXX. (there being no similar idiom in the Hebrew of Isa. liii. 8), St. Luke seems to speak of the *servant’s judgment* as meaning the *judging the servant*; but St. Paul (see 2 Thess. i. 5) never uses it in this sense; and St. John, when he uses the genitive with this word, always means the judgment of—the decision and sentence made by—the person; as of God’s judgment (John xiv. 7; xvi. 7; xix. 2). The dative

is used for the judgment of a person judged by St. James (Jas. ii. 13); and it is clear that the ambiguous meaning which the genitive *of* after the word *judgment* has in English, practically does not exist in Greek. The Greeks would speak of the judgment *of* a judge, or the judgment *of* a contest, or the judgment *of* the bow at a trial of skill in archery; but a judgment *about* a prisoner. It seems safe to conclude that the genitive, or possessive pronoun, applied to this word judgment, always refers to the judge, unless the context should prove that it could only refer to the judged.

The verb *to judge* is never used in the three first Gospels except of men judging men. St. John records our Lord's saying, that God did not send Him into the world that He might judge the world (John iii. 17); and His again saying, 'The Father judges no one' (John v. 22), but has given all judgment to the Son; presently adding a very interesting description of what kind of thing judgment in His hands is. Not only the living, but all who are in the tombs, will hear His voice (John v. 28), including both re-risen saints, and 'the rest' of the dead. We who are now living seem to be close to the border of that time, when the rider on the white horse is slaying all kingdoms and empires by the broadsword of his mouth. Our Lord adds that all, when they so hear, will pass forth; they who performed, *i.e.*, did or made, what is good, to resurrection of life, and they who practised what is good-for-nothing to resurrection of judgment. He adds that He cannot do anything of Himself—springing merely out of His own will: 'I judge, as I hear; and My judgment is just; for I am not seeking My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.' This seems to accord with His description of how, when He shall come in His glory, and all the angels with Him—as the armies in heaven accompanied the rider, all on white horses (xix. 14)—before Him will be gathered all the nations (or Gentiles), and He will separate

them one from another, as the shepherd—compare our xix. 15, where the rider tends (literally *shepherds*, if there were such a verb in English) the nations—as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. The process is altogether different from that in our courts of justice, which would be full of the wrangling, and evidence, and cross-examinations, to prove that a goat was a goat, and not a sheep, and so forth. The *process* of the ‘last judgment’ we must not look for in law courts invented by ‘the beast’; but, where we are told we shall find it, in the method of the shepherd, carried out with unerring and irresistible power. The proofs will all be completed before the judgment begins.

In John viii. 15, 16, our Lord repeats that He judges none; and again in xii. 47. In all the other cases of using the verb, He speaks of men judging other men and things. And it would seem that the essence of His judgment will be, that it will only confirm that which all His angels and saints will have discerned to be right. The judgment will not be sprung upon an audience who have no opinion or conviction of their own; but will be such as all in heaven can glorify with praise, by the time its fulfilment is come (xix. 1-9).

To return to the vision, and to the position of things, before the great bright throne is seen. During the thousand years none but the saints who had not worshipped the beast will live again. During that time, then, the inhabitants of the world will be in a better position than that which Christ (Luke xvi. 27, etc.) makes Dives plead would ensure the conversion of his brethren. They will have every help we can conceive: Satan will be excluded, and the saints will be raised from the dead and sent to them, and open wickedness will be suppressed and broken to pieces by a staff of iron. It seems intended that Christ and His saints will live and reign with a more intimate presence and action than the former has exer-

cised since He finally ascended alone into heaven in the presence of His first disciples. Meantime, these re-risen saints will have the glory coveted by Satan and his beasts, and assumed by the kings and emperors, or other governments, of the beast. They will be priests and kings of the most high God, and will in both offices share, not under only, but with His Son, in His holiness, power, and glory. As no measure can be given of the glory of God, so no measure is given of the glory He is willing to grant His saints, except, as is stated by our Saviour in His teaching and parables, the proved faithfulness and goodness of each saint himself.

At, or about, the end of the thousand years Satan will be allowed to return to earth, and will be free to lead astray all the nations, or Gentiles, represented by Gog and Magog. As the Euphrates represented the border between Israel and the wise and organized Gentiles, or nations of the world, so, under the names of Gog and Magog, all the less organized and wilder tribes of the north-east Gentile regions were included, such as, in Ezekiel's time, parts of Persia, and such as, in St. John's time, are called by Josephus Scythians—Gentiles, in the sense of not being Israelites, not so organized as to be ranked as nations, and more wild, needy, and ferocious. Christendom had, under the sixth trumpet, suffered from the four angels, who were up to that time bound at the great river Euphrates—a phrase which might represent all the civilized, or at least organized, nations of the four quarters of the globe outside Christendom. But, at the time now described, Christendom no longer exists; it is replaced by a kingdom of Christ extending over the whole globe, and the attack is from wilder and more anarchical people, not forming nations. It would be rash to consider whether the violence threatened by this war be physical or spiritual, or be moral temptation; we have no clue to the progress human knowledge will have

made in both material and moral power and weapons ; but of this we may be assured, that such an attack made by men, of any *genus* we can suppose consistently with our experience, will be made with the will to use every means available to enforce success. Nor can we physically locate either side. Jerusalem, then as now, represents God's servants throughout the world, and Gog and Magog, by analogy, represent a certain kind of association of men throughout all the world, as the beasts, or the harlot, represented such an association throughout all Christendom. Satan makes his last appearance on remand, not as a dragon, for, if so, he would surely have had that name given him, at least, where it is said that he is cast into the lake (verse 10), as it is where he is cast into the bottomless pit (verse 3) ; and he receives, so far as *earth*,—for its ages of ages will in any form last,—his final judgment from heaven, from which he had, from our Saviour's time, been thrown down. This is his final earthly sentence and punishment.

Both judgment and court seem specially quiet, and free from disturbing action. What effect upon the devil and his angels this convincing and crushing judgment of him, of his empires, and of those who worshipped his empires, will have, we are not told. It can never be reversed, nor its fiery sentence of deprivation and exclusion disallowed. It may well be called a judgment and sentence scientifically eternal, though the Greek language cannot express such an idea with the same precision as our own.

The great bright throne, and God seated on it, are a signal for the disappearance of the symbolical earth and its heaven, and, presumably of its sea ; not a sun, star, nor beast remains, nor is there any place open for such things to exist in. In the judgment we see two sets of books used—one set containing each man's deserts, and the other the names of those renewed in spirit, and sealed, who have been able to take part in the service of

God in the *earth*. All who are not written in the last book, are condemned by the first set of books, and are abolished, together with death, and the state of departed souls.

In this vision, then, the throne, or judgment-seat of supreme and final judgment on earth is seen. The judge is not described, but some of the details of the process of this great symbolical trial and sentence are given. After the judgment, St. John sees a new heaven and earth (xxi. 1). He is not describing anything actual; he is describing a vision in which the old earth, heaven, and sea, flee and are gone, and a new heaven and earth appear.

As in the case of our own hearts when *renewed* by God's grace, so of our earth. The description of either as *become new* or as *changed*, and so forth, does not indicate that the old one ceases to exist, and that a new one takes its place, but indicates that the same heart, or earth, is changed, or renewed, to an important, and practically essential, extent.

St. Peter (2 Pet. iii. 10) seems to describe the actual destruction of our earth about this time. Such a destruction is bound to occur in the course of time, either by the cooling down of the sun, and freezing of the earth, and of its liquids and gases; or by some stellar collision, which would raise the heat of the sun. What St. Peter describes might be the natural consequence of a fixed star, of a size comparable to our sun, colliding with our sun, and heating it up, say, so large as the orbit of Mercury or Venus. In such a case this earth would become so heated as to become new.

We cannot connect St. Peter's description with St. John's. The two may refer to the same event from different points of view, or it may be that St. Peter is writing figuratively, as well as St. John. In favour of this last view may be mentioned the frequency with which *fire* is used figuratively as an associate of judgment.

12.—To return to St. John. He saw the dead, not the souls, but the re-risen bodies, appear to be judged, each according to his works, as written in the scrolls. Death and Hades are not said to appear or to be judged, but they are thrown into the lake of fire. These were seen and recognised by St. John in the fourth seal (vi. 8); but he gives no description of them there. They seem here to be symbolical figures, like the beasts, each in charge of a group of the dead whom they have to give up, and distinguished from the sea, which also gives up its dead. We can only conjecture that the symbols of the vision were in harmony with some of the fancies of the time, and were framed so as to leave no loophole for supposing that any dead would escape the judgment. A prevailing fancy was that those who died on earth went to Hades, while some were excluded; and amongst them those who died at sea, who hovered about the sea in some ghostly way, unable to recover their old bodily form, such as the shades in Hades possessed. One thing deserves notice: the vision could show no bodily form, made of material from the heaven or earth, which had fled; unless, as seems the case, the *fleeing* did not leave a vacuity, but only involved the disappearance of the old inhabitants, and their environment, and left a new class of inhabitants, with new environment. Probably the symbols failed here, and the position of the lake of fire must be considered indeterminate. We may be sure that the lake represents a suitable existence for evil beings, embodied or bodiless, men or beasts or death, whence they cannot come out to molest the glorified saints; and the figure *weeping and gnashing of teeth* (Matt. viii. 12) is characteristic of their condition together.

The name of a lake of fire burning with sulphur recalls Daniel's vision of the great sea, stirred by the four winds of heaven (Dan. vii. 2); representing the condition of the people of the civilized heathen world living on earth in

Daniel's time. Instead of a lake of fire and sulphur, the condition of men is there represented as the Mediterranean, with all winds blowing at once. The condition of the damned is here represented as a lake of fire burning with sulphur. It seems perfectly idle for us to try to construct *Hell* from such a representation, any more than an uninformed man in Daniel's time could have constructed the Gentile nations, constitutions, and employments of our time, out of Daniel's *Mediterranean*. It need only be said that no intelligible meaning can be assigned to the dragon, beast, death and Hades being sent to accompany the damned, unless the latter are still to be conversant with their old dispositions, organizations, and destruction, under new forms.

CHAPTER XXI.

ORIGINAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

- 1 AND I saw a new heaven, and a new earth; for the first heaven, and the first earth were gone; and the sea is not any longer.
- 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, descending out of the heaven from God, made ready as a
3 bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice out of the throne, saying 'See! the tent of God with men! And he will camp with them; and they will be his peoples; and he will be God with them,
4 their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death will not be any longer; nor will mourning, nor crying out, nor toil be—no longer,
5 because the first things are gone.' And he who was seated upon the throne said 'See! I make all (things) new;' and he says, 'Write:—These words are faithful
6 and true.' And he said to me, 'I am become the *A* and the *Ω* (the *A* and the *Z*), the beginning and the end. I shall give to the thirsty out of the fountain
7 of the water of life, as a free gift. He who conquers will inherit these things; and I shall be to him God, and he will be to me son. But to the cowardly, and
8 unfaithful, and disgusting, and slayers, and fornicators, and those who drug, and idol-worshippers, and to all liars—their allotment will be in the lake burning with fire and sulphur, which is the second death.
- 9 And one of the seven angels, who have the seven

saucers, who are full of the seven last plagues, came and talked with me, saying, 'Hither! I will show thee
10 the bride, the wife of the Lamb.' And he carried me away in spirit on to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem descending out of
11 the heaven from God, having the glory of God. That which gives her light (is) like a very precious
12 stone, as if a jasper stone, clear as crystal. (A city) having a great wall: having (also) twelve gateways, and twelve angels upon the gateways, and names written on, which are the names of the twelve tribes
13 of the sons of Israel: from east (are) three gateways, and from north three gateways, and from south
14 three gateways, and from west three gateways; and the wall of the city has twelve foundation-stones, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15 And he who was talking with me had a measure, a gold reed, that he might measure the city, and its
16 gateways, and its wall. And the city lies rectangular, and its length as much as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed, up to stadii, of
17 twelve thousands; its length and breadth and height are equal. And he measured its wall of a hundred and forty-four cubits, man's measure, which is
18 angel's. And the material of its wall is jasper; and the city pure gold-work like pure glass. The foundation-stones of the wall of the city are adorned with every precious stone:—the first foundation-stone
19 jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth
20 sardion, the seventh gold-stone, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh
21 hyacinth, the twelfth amethyst; and the twelve gateways twelve pearls throughout, each one of the gateways was out of one pearl; and the street of the

22 city pure gold, as if transparent glass. And temple I
 did not see in it, for the Lord, the almighty God, is
 23 its temple, and the Lamb. And the city has no need
 of sun or of moon, that they may shine in it; for the
 glory of God lighted it; and its lamp is the Lamb:
 24 and the nations will walk about by its light; and the
 25 kings of the earth bring their glory into it; and its
 gateways will never be closed by day—for there is no
 26 night there—and will bring the glory and worth of
 27 the nations into it. And there will never enter into
 it any common thing, nor (any one) making disgust
 and falsehood; but only they who have been written
 in the scroll of life of the Lamb.

THE NEW JERUSALEM.

SECTION I. VERSES I TO 8. NEW HEAVEN AND
 NEW EARTH.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

1.—THE SEA IS NOT ANY LONGER. In all such phrases the plain English is, *There was no sea any more*, though the literal translation is intelligible. The Greeks and English use negatives intelligibly; but in neither case is the use scientific; so that literal translations may be confusing, as here; or even convey opposite meanings.

2.—ADORNED FOR HER HUSBAND, or by *her husband*.

3.—GOD WITH THEM: in Hebrew, *Emmanuel*.

THEIR GOD: the evidence of MSS. for these words is only equal to that for omitting them.

4.—GOD: the preponderance of evidence is for omitting this. The words might then stand thus: 'and he will be God with them, and will wipe away,' etc.

DEATH WILL NOT, etc.: in plain English, *There will be no death any more*; and so with *mourning*, etc.

6.—I AM BECOME. There is a confusion in the best MSS. here, which makes it possible that St. John wrote 'It is done. I am *A* and Ω ,' etc.

A and Ω . Here and elsewhere, I suppose this should be in English *A* and *Z*, to suit our alphabet. I have added the latter in brackets.

8.—WHO DRUG. Medicine was as actually mixed up with, and with the majority of practitioners overborne by, enchantments and misuse, as astronomy was by astrology and necromancy.

LAKE. The most usual lakes were salt-water backwaters or lagoons, or fresh-water marshes and meres; but, as with us, the word seems quite capable of being applied descriptively to volcanic lakes of glowing lava and fire; and these were usually described as coming up direct from Tartarus, or the bottomless pit, and as commonly believed so to come. This symbolical lake may refer to the descriptions, current in St. John's time, of some actual volcanic lake of fire; but most likely to poetical and mythological ideals, suggested by the sight, or description, of actual eruptions.

Expository Notes.

1.—St. John is now going to describe the new heaven and earth. The seething sea of humanity, tossed about under every wind of heaven, has no representative here. Instead of the secular powers, and the tempers which maintained them under Satan's influence and promotion, there is seen God's tent, with God dwelling in it, and His peoples, like an Eastern brotherhood, around. The temper is love, not ambitious rivalry, nor violent contest for the survival of the fittest; the tone is peace and confidence, not watchful distrust; the mind is to exercise love to God and one's neighbour, not to *utilize* Him. The new city Jerusalem is a bride of God; a total contrast to Egypt, Sodom, Babylon, or Rome. We may

now dismiss such comparisons; there is no room for them in the city which God inhabits as Emmanuel. There will be no more empires, nor tears, nor death, nor toil; and the delightfulness is, not so much the personal relief, as the feeling that all the security, honour, and comfort arise from the nearness of our own God, and is, and will continue, the fruit of *His* love, who sent His own Son into the world to save it. And now, amongst His own, His life is their life, His conquest their conquest; each citizen has no limit to his inheritance but his own fitness; to provide a place for himself, it is not necessary to extinguish his neighbour. No scales and weights are used: the most high, or necessary, benefits are a free gift. What a happiness of mutual confidence, in all, this implies! The cowardly, unfaithful, disgusting loafer, the murderous robber, the treacherous fornicator or poisoner, do not exist: they are all absent, in the lake.

When the prophet says that he sees a new heaven and earth, of course he does not mean a new abode of God; but a new earth and its heaven. There is no reason to give a mere physical meaning to this part of the vision alone; so we must take it as a symbol to represent a new state of life, on the new *earth*, corresponding to its present civilized inhabitants and their rulers; a new state of life, indeed, but one of which God has already raised up types, in various forms, in His government of His people under Abraham, Moses, and David. The bride, the holy Jerusalem, represents an organization of a nation, or body of nations, a distinct class, 'marked' men, but, instead of being scattered over the world, it includes the whole world. Of this the ancient Jerusalem was a type, with fully sufficient promises, but under necessary conditions which its people failed to fulfil. Even so far as it obtained those promises, it was so unfit to be a real type, that it was miserably destroyed. The only sun, moon, or star in the new heaven, now become God's tent

(comp. Ps. xix. 4; civ. 2), is God Himself; and the new city, which came down from heaven. This last doubtless represents that the tone, temper, mind, knowledge, worship, and practice of all who are to form the city are from God, in a perfection and harmony measured by His own power and attributes. This new Jerusalem is decked by her husband as a bride; and the *earth* is newly-adapted to be her inhabitants and subjects. These saints, the new *earth*, are called *men* and *peoples*; not *people* (verse 3), implying a grouping into distinct tribes or governments; but the name of *kings* or *kingdoms* is avoided, since all are under the one *King*, Christ, the Lamb, much more consolidated than any human empire or kingdom ever was; forming altogether one body in Christ.

SECTION II. VERSES 9 TO 27. THE FOUR SQUARE CITY.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

9.—WHO ARE FULL: *i.e.*, the *angels*, not the *saucers*; perhaps because in the vision the saucers were now empty, and to the prophet the angels alone still stood representing the future plagues.

10.—IN SPIRIT: *i.e.*, still in the vision.

DESCENDING. St. John does not say descending *on to the mountain*, either here, or in verse 2.

HEAVEN. The last-mentioned *heaven* is the new heaven (verse 1); and that is doubtless the one meant.

11.—THAT WHICH GIVES HER LIGHT: literally *her light*; as we call a lamp, or a heavenly body, *a light*. So to translate it, however, would be ambiguous; since in English we have not, like the Greeks, a separate word for the light which gives the light, and the light given out by it.

15. In this description St. John seems purposely to avoid expressing the verbs *is*, *was*; so much so that in

many places the English, and in some the Greek, becomes lame without them. It is possible that he expresses them only where he means *represent, represented*: and therefore where St. John does not express the verb substantive, it is put in parenthesis.

CLEAR AS CRYSTAL: literally *like ice*.

12.—HAVING. This (twice) is nominative in Greek, the preceding one (verse 11) being accusative, governed by *showed me*.

14.—HAS: literally (*is*) *having*, in the masculine, like the participle *saying*, in vi. 1; xi. 15. This is peculiar to the 'Revelation'; possibly due to St. John's thoughts being on the person or persons represented as vividly as on the symbol he is describing.

16.—LIES RECTANGULAR: means simply *is rectangular in plan*.

UP TO STADII, OF 12 THOUSANDS. We do not know how the angel seemed to measure 12,000 stadii—say 1,380 English miles—with his reed; nor would it make things simple to suppose that in some way a measure of a stadius length was exhibited. It is safe to suppose that St. John expresses:—that the lengths now given him were given *in stadii*; and that the angel measured the city and found it to be twelve lengths of a thousand. In the original the word is not the adjective *thousand*, but the substantive *thousands* (as Gen. xxiv. 60; Num. x. 36). In the LXX. *rulers of thousands* (as in Ex. xviii. 21) is a compound word, like *centurion*; and when the thousands were called up by Samuel (1 Sam. x. 19) they are called *sceptres* or *batons*, as if he called up each division in the person only of its 'ruler of a thousand,' carrying his official staff. The LXX. offers us a very similar instance to this expression of St. John, in Ps. cxix. 72, where the substantive *thousands* is used, without saying thousands of what, as here. There the subject is *gold and silver*, and here it is *stadii*. There is no possibility of giving a

definite meaning to a thousand of gold and silver; nor can we here define either what was measured, nor the length of the measurement.

LENGTH, etc. Whether the length, breadth, and height were each twelve thousands, or all equal and each four thousands; or whether the circumference of the city in plan were twelve thousands, and therefore the length, breadth, and height each three thousands, must remain in dispute, as must the meaning of *height*; whether it refers to the height of the wall itself, or the height of it above the valley, if it stood, like part of Jerusalem, on a high cliff. It is important to observe that *are* is expressed in the original, and consequently refers not to the symbol, but wholly to what the length, breadth, and height of the city *represent*, in thus being equal.

17.—ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY-FOUR CUBITS: apparently the thickness of the wall, as he saw it from the mountain, measured across the top. To suppose a wall one thousand three hundred and eighty miles square in the face, and only seventy-two yards thick, would make its proportions similar to those of a sheet of steel an eighth of an inch thick and above one hundred and ten yards square.

WHICH IS ANGEL'S. We cannot be too careful to take the guidance so carefully provided by St. John. The symbol, as a real figure or picture, is quite lost sight of; the one hundred and forty-four cubits (is) a man's measure, which is (or represents) an angel's. What *cubits* were is not stated; presumably it is unimportant.

18.—The names of the stones are, as nearly as may be, the Greek names written in English letters; most of these names have been used, or misused, by lapidaries till they have become difficult to identify. Even *pure glass* is vague: few glasses were transparent, and St. John seems to mention it, whenever he describes transparent glass, 'like crystal.' Yet it could hardly be pure *yellow* that is

described, whether transparent or not. At all events, we may suppose that the yellow gold seemed to sparkle as clearly and brightly as glass.

21.—THROUGHOUT: or possibly *by itself*, as some think. The expression occurs nowhere else in the New Testament.

STREET: literally *the broad (way)*, as in xi. 8; xxii. 2; Esther vi. 9, 11; LXX. It probably means *open places*, and, if so, the English plural *streets* would give the meaning better than the singular *street*. A *street* in our sense, as manifestly meant in Acts ix. 11; xii. 10, is quite a different word in Greek. So xxii. 2.

24.—ITS LIGHT: *i.e.*, of the glory of God; or it may, so far as the grammar is concerned, mean *the light of the city*; but it is not exactly implied elsewhere that the city itself shines by its own light.

26.—WILL BRING: *i.e.*, the gateways will; as in Isa. lx. 11 (Heb. and LXX.), from which it is perhaps quoted.

WORTH: may mean either *honour*, referring to the 'kings' in the verse in Isaiah just referred to, or *value* of all kinds, as in Isa. lxvi. 12; or both.

27.—COMMON: in the Jewish sense, as made pretty clear by Acts x. 14; and just so 1 Macc. i. 47.

Expository Notes.

9.—Here one of the seven plague-angels again steps in to give, so far as symbols may, a fuller idea of the glory and stability of the new city. The description hitherto seems to follow the analogy of Israel as organized under God's laws, and removed from all human interference and slavery, starting from Sinai under the personal conduct of the God who had descended from heaven on that mountain—freed from all oppression, fear, and struggle for existence, and from all idol-worship, temptation from without, and false religious teaching. God then had His tent amongst their tents. Their clothes did not wear out,

nor was death known, except as punishment for wilful rebellion. Manna is not alluded to by St. John; but the fountain of the water of life will freely supply the thirsty. It is impossible to resist a conviction that the parallel between Israel rescued from Egypt, borne as it were on God's wings in the desert, and offered and promised a great future, and the saints rescued from the present world, and planted in the new world described by St. John, will go farther. God's ways have a persistent character, and it is His pleasure to exhibit that persistence; to a belief in it the patriarchs seem to have trusted as their only assurance of a future life. The process God adopts with a grain of mustard-seed is similar to that He adopts with His own kingdom. But in this vision it is not possible that the future career of the rebellious and stiffnecked Israel would be fit to represent the development of God's glorified kingdom of pure and faithful saints. Israel failed as a type of unlimited evolution; but that there will be continued evolution of the white-clothed saints is certain; and this seems implied in the inspired phrases, which are usually translated 'for ever' and 'eternal, which literally mean 'for the ages of the ages,' 'lasting an age,' or 'lasting only an age'; in any case, implying successive eras, each of a higher order than the previous one.

We have no description of the state of the men and devils in the lake of fire, in company with the old empires, death, and Hades. It is excluded from the vision. We must be content to know that their condition there is described as a closed lake of fire, in the same vision of St. John in which the original condition of the same men and beasts in this present world is described as the sea (xiii. 1). Daniel describes it as the Mediterranean. The expressions for the duration of that condition are similar to those for the duration of the condition of the glorified saints, and alike they imply an indefinite succession of different ages or eras.

Of the new Jerusalem we can only know what is shown by the angel, and only a few references touching the character of the symbolism can be added. The city is as impossible a city as Ezekiel's cherubim were impossible animals, or his wheels an impossible mode of traveling; it is, therefore, only from the points shown or noted by the angel that we may draw any trustworthy symbolism or suggestions. The city is not the Church of Christ, and is a different symbol to the temple built of living stones, and supported by living pillars upon Christ himself as corner foundation stone. It represents the spiritual tone and mind, confidence and knowledge, union of hearts, objects and pleasures, the entrance into which by the glorified saints is anticipated in an imperfect degree by the entrance of Christ's servants into His Church on earth.

11.—The city is lighted by a pure and permanent light. It is enclosed by an impregnable wall, perhaps representing safety, complete salvation. It faces all four points of the compass, accessible on every side without obstruction. In each face are three gateways, and this perhaps has no meaning, except that the total of twelve is equally divided. As the twelve tribes were so arranged in the camp in the wilderness that three nominal tribes out of the thirteen faced a cardinal point of the compass, it is open to question whether the symbolic number twelve be derived from the Divine number three, multiplied by four, to symbolize every direction of the compass, or whether twelve is a number chosen as a convenient symbol, being neither large nor small, and being divisible by so many factors, two, three, four, and six. It is observable how many very important divisions are made by the number twelve. There are about twelve and three-eighths lunar months in the year, yet, in spite of this discrepancy, all nations preferred to call the year twelve months. Twelve was as universally chosen as the number of hours in the

day, whatever its length. In coins and measures twelve has been successfully used, though it harmonizes neither with the scale of notation, nor of repeated halving. The Apostles are always grouped in three distinct sets of four, unlike the tribes, which (as above) were in four sets of three. This indifference in grouping indicates that twelve is the symbolic number, and that its component parts are used either for practical purposes, as with the Apostles, or in conformity with some other symbol, so as to make even the four sides of the tabernacle, or of the new Jerusalem. We may, then, take twelve to symbolize a definitely appointed group, wherewith God originates and develops some plan He has predestined to be carried out on earth, as by months he develops years, by the sons of Jacob His chosen people, by the Apostles His Church, and by these gateways access of all saints to His face.

No corner foundation stone—that from which the whole building is laid out, and which, when once laid, cannot be altered without entirely altering the position of the building—is here mentioned. Therefore there is no symbolic stress on such stones as happen to be at the corners; but it may be assumed that, the site having been determined, a foundation-stone was set, one at each corner, and two in the length of each wall, to guide the builders; all in idea only, for the city has no similarity to any human city as actually built.

15.—All the conditions of the city are exactly measured by God's golden rule. The city is a cube, equal in space from all points of view. The length of the rod is not given, nor the measurement, whether it be one stadium of twelve thousands, or twelve of some measure called a thousand stadia; or whether it be a measure of one stadium repeated twelve thousand times. It is not clear whether each side of the city measured twelve thousands, or three thousands, or four thousands; but the length,

breadth, and height, whether taken successively or collectively, were equal. Historians about St. John's time were fond of giving the top breadth of the walls of great cities, and this may be the measurement of one hundred and forty-four cubits given here. The general shape of the city would be somewhat that of an altar made of twelve stones set together on end in the earth, square in plan, three on each side, and so long that, when filled in with earth, the altar would be a cube. The ancient altars thus made, of the mosaic pattern, were of unhewn stones—a circumstance which, while necessary to typify that no hand but God's could adequately frame an altar fit for His worship, would necessarily interfere with the symmetry of the structure, and is dropped out of sight here. No such difficulty occurs in the New Jerusalem which God Himself has built. No perishable nor earthy material is mentioned, but the supply of the most precious known stones is ample, and the symmetry and shape, even of the most refractory, is complete. Instead of the twelve stones of an altar, to represent the twelve sons of Israel, are twelve gateways inscribed with the names of twelve of the tribes, as if to represent that all the citizens are the chosen people of God, the true Israel, and that there exist none to guard against. The gateways are always open, as in a time of perfect peace, and as the vision includes all nations and kings—whatever these represent, where all are kings (xxii. 5)—in the whole world, these gateways would be seen in constant use. It seems useless to speculate on what the different stones were, much less on what they represent, further than to notice that they indicate the same absence of sameness, which we now see in God's creation of everything, from a mineral to a man's mind.

The kings bring in, for themselves and from their peoples, *tribute*, the acknowledgment of imperial power. St. John calls it *glory*. *Tribute* was delusively called

presents in the old earth, but in Christ's kingdom this tribute is so naturally and freely brought—it is such a happiness to bring it—that neither of the old names occur to the prophets (Isaiah lx. 3-8). As to the contribution of worth and glory being any loss to the contributors, St. John knew differently, even of such contributions as were made under painful or humiliating difficulties in his own time (Matt. xix. 29; Mark x. 29, 30; Luke xviii. 29).

CHAPTER XXII.

ORIGINAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

- 1 AND he showed me a river of water of life, bright as
if crystal, passing out from the throne of God and
2 of the Lamb : between its street and the river, on
this side and that, timber of life, yielding twelve
fruits, bearing its fruit according to each month : and
the leaves of the timber (are) for nurture of the
3 nations. And there will be no cursed thing any
longer. And the throne of God and of the Lamb
4 will be in it ; and his servants will work for him, and
will see his face ; and his name (will be) on their
5 foreheads. And there will be no night any longer ;
and they will have no need of light of lamp and
light of sun, because the Lord God will give light
upon them and they will reign for the ages.
- 6 And he said to me, ' These words are faithful and
true ; and the Lord the God of the spirits of the
prophets sent his angel to show his servants what
7 must quickly occur. And, see ! I am coming quickly.
Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of
this scroll.'
- 8 And I, John (am the man), hearing and seeing
these things : and when I heard and saw, I fell to
salaam before the feet of the angel showing these
9 things to me ; and he says to me, ' Look (thou dost
it) not : I am fellow-servant of thee and of thy

brothers the prophets, and of those who are keeping the words of this scroll : salaam to God.'

10 And he says to me, ' Do not seal up the words of
the prophecy of this scroll ; for the season is near.
11 He who does wrong, let him do wrong still ; and the
foul, let him be befouled still ; and the upright, let
him do righteousness still ; and the holy, let him be
12 holy still. See ! I am coming quickly : and my re-
ward is with me, to pay back to each as his work is.
13 I (am) the \mathcal{A} and the \mathcal{Z} (the A and the Z), first and
14 last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are they
who wash their dresses, that they will have authority
15 over the tree of life, and (that they) should enter by
the gateways into the city : outside are the dogs,
and those who drug, and the fornicators, and the
murderers, and the idol-worshippers ; and every one
16 fond of, and doing, a lie. I, Jesus, sent my angel to
testify these things to you at the churches.'

' I am the root and stock of David, the bright star
17 of the morning. And the Spirit and the Bride say,
Come. And let him who hears say, Come ; and let
him who is thirsty come : let him who will, take
water of life, as a free gift.'

18 I testify to everyone who hears the words of the
prophecy of this scroll : If anyone should add upon
them, God will add upon them the plagues written
19 in that scroll ; and if anyone should take away from
the words of the scroll of this prophecy, God will
take away his part of the tree of life, and out of the
holy city, which have been written in this scroll.

20 He who is testifying these things says, ' Aye ! I am
coming quickly.' Amen ! come, O Lord Jesus.

21 The grace of the Lord Jesus (be) with all the
saints.

THE VISION OF THE REDEEMED.

Exegetical or Critical Notes.

2.—ITS : *the city's streets.*

TIMBER : the word used in the LXX. for tree, all through Gen. ii. 9. Except in the Revelation it is not used for growing timber in the New Testament, but for *staves* (Matt. xxvi. 47, etc.); *stocks* (Acts xvi. 24); building timber (1 Cor. iii. 12); and frequently (Acts v. 30 and onwards) for the cross of our Lord. Perhaps there is allusion to the last in St. John's use of the word.

12.—FRUITS : that is, a crop every month (Ezek. xlvii. 12), unfailing fruit.

NURTURE : used of medical and surgical treatment; also (Luke xii. 42) household management.

3.—WORK FOR : or *serve* (St. Stephen in Acts vii. 7, from Ex. iii. 12; LXX.).

4.—SEE HIS FACE : meaning probably will be admitted, at their wish, to direct communication with Him; as a king's trusted ministers and nobility are to audience with the monarch.

5.—THEY : the servants of the Lamb.

GIVE LIGHT. *Give* is inserted in English, because the verb *light* is ambiguous, which it is not in the Greek.

6.—THESE : *i.e., the above.*

QUICKLY : literally, *in quick (time) without delay*, soon. So in Acts xii. 7.

7.—QUICKLY : literally, *quickly, swiftly*. In English the context is usually enough to make the meaning clear; and this even a periphrasis would hardly do alone. The slang word—what must occur—*sharp* is, perhaps, a strict translation of 'quickly' in the sixth verse; but the word *sharp* in that sense is only accepted as official English in telegraphy.

KEEPS : or *watch, observes, has an eye to.*

THIS SCROLL : apparently referring to the scroll of this Revelation, which St. John was finishing.

8.—THESE : *i.e., the above.*

11.—DOES WRONG : habitually, consciously commits injuries.

UPRIGHT : or *just.*

12.—REWARD : perhaps strictly wages. He does not, like some generals, leave his soldiers to reward themselves, or go without reward. So Isa. xl. 10.

14.—THAT THEY WILL : is a mixed construction of *that they may*, and a promise *that they will*. So xiv. 13.

16.—AT THE CHURCHES. The evidence of the MSS. is about equal for *in* and for *upon* the churches. *You* is plural, of course.

19.—PART : or *share.*

PART OF THE TREE : literally, part *away from* the tree.

Expository Notes.

1.—From the description of the river, and its fountain head, it seems to mean such a river as might be supplied by an aqueduct in almost any city of importance in St. John's time ; not wide enough, if open, to interfere with foot traffic, and, we may assume, adequately bridged. The fountains are numerous and copious in Rome, playing through, or under, allegorical figures and deities, and supplying every part of the city by channels. The word *street*, as likely as not, means all the street-ways open for general traffic, and for display of wares, or for temporary camps.

2.—As the fruits of the trees give life to those who eat them, so the leaves are for the orderly management, medical attention, healing treatment, of nations—an appropriate symbolism, if we consider what numbers of lives are lost by the only means known now of settling national differences in the last resort.

15.—This verse, perhaps, indicates the symbolism of the city walls. In an ordinary case, the walls of a city keep out wild dogs, jackals, hyenas, and all objectionable animals; and as these hide away, or, at least, are rarely worth a thought, during the time the ordinary business and occupation of the city and its visitors is going on, the walls are felt as a security from annoyance by such animals. Hence, the walls of the new Jerusalem may be a symbol of security from all annoyances mentioned here, and in xxi. 8, although these appear to be already safely removed and imprisoned in the lake of fire.

THE END.

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